

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

SEPTEMBER 2018

September 11, 2018



*Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer's death, nor on the
birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest floweres o'
the season
Are our carnations, and streak'd gillyvors.*

The Winter Tale by Shakespeare

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Hello and Welcome,

As summer wanes, our first meeting of the season is packed with new ideas. First are the **Dessert Committees** for September, December and June. For the September 11 meeting, we have Jean Drees, Joan Hajduk, Caroline Kessman, Collette Lemanski, Jen Picard, Dianne Romeo, and Jan Chague who will bake. Everyone else will bring a main dish. Don't forget your place setting!

Second, the big **AGC Fundraiser**, the Apple Squeeze, has put on new clothes with a French Bistro atmosphere. We will sell hot coffee and tea, muffins and bars. There will still be lavender sachets, hydrangea bouquets, and wreaths. It will be something different and a fun time.

The Fundraising Committee is asking all you bakers and/or purchasers to bake one dozen "homemade" muffins or bars to enhance the start of our awesome fundraiser on Saturday, September 22nd.

At our September meeting there will be a sign-up sheet for help on Friday, September 21st, at the Academy. In the late afternoon/early evening we

need help to set-up the tent and tables and to package the muffins and bars. Members can bring in fresh cut hydrangeas for bouquets at that time. For those members making wreaths, you may deliver them on Friday or Saturday.

On Saturday in front of the Academy members are needed to man the booth and make coffee.

At the September meeting more information will be revealed including recipes for the yummy muffins and bars. Carol Rumph added, "*And don't worry, there will be enough jobs for everyone to participate in some way!*"

Third is a surprise **AGC Inaugural Paper Bag Auction** as a mini-fundraiser for the Club. Bring your change purse to buy raffle tickets for Home and Garden items. Tickets are one for \$1.00 or six for \$5.00. You could go home with a real treasure!

At our "Meet and Greet" we will also have an opportunity to solve a problem you may have in your garden. If you have a plant or area in your garden that has you wondering what to do, take a photo of it and bring it to the meeting. Someone might have a cure!

The Program Committee, chaired by Harriet Wetstone, has come up with some fun programs for the year. The AGC Handbook has all the details.

A big **Thank You** to all the Chairs: Janice Brindisi, Mary Ann Coakley, Kathy DeVylder, Sandy Merlino, Patricia Neri, Dianne Romeo, Carol Newton Rumph, Bobbie Anne Salinetti, Tjasa Sprague; and to the AGC Officers: Ginny Akabane, Jen Picard, Harriet Wetstone; and all the AGC Members who have helped to make this Club a success.

Thank you all!

Sincerely,

Jan Chague
AGC President

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HORTICULTURAL COLUMN

By Harriet Wetstone

Ticks! Mosquitos! Ants! These are subjects very much on all our minds in this season of rare wonderful weather when we want to be outside, in gardens and parks and woods, but especially in our own gardens.

This month I have been reading up on plants that contain natural insect repellent. Including these plants in your garden will not insure that your garden is insect-free, but there is much anecdotal evidence that having them around is helpful.

Not surprisingly, we are talking about herbs – mints and lavenders and lemongrass and geraniums and many more. These are all plants containing highly aromatic compounds that are used to create essential oil solutions. An essential oil is simply a concentrate of a plant's oils. One family of plants among many is the Lamiaceae family which includes mint, catmint, basil, rosemary, sage, and oregano. These are plants with square stems and opposing leaves and strong fragrances. They work as insect repellents because they affect the insects' sensors, disabling their ability to detect targets (like us), and so the insects go away in order to recover. **Wow!**



Mint



Apple Mint

Mint (*Mentha*) is one of my favorite plants. Mint, without a qualifier like Peppermint or Apple mint, usually refers to spearmint leaves. Putting fresh mint in pantries helps to deter ants, and hanging sachets of dried mint (or mint tea bags) helps deter moths and flies. And rubbing your pets with handfuls of mint helps deter fleas and other biting insects.

Yes, I know mint is invasive, but some varieties are less invasive than others. I have a patch of a wonderful citrus mint that I wish would spread, but doesn't. Apple mint, however, will take over your garden and your house along with it! We all know about putting mint in pots as a means of containing it. Just watch out though, the roots will find their way out the pot's drainage hole and off it will go!!

Catnip (e.g. *Nepeta faassenii* and *Nepeta cataria*) is another plant that helps repel mosquitoes and ticks. An Iowa State University study found that the essential oil in catnip, nepetalactone, is ten times more effective than DEET, the chemical used in most insect repellents. *Nepeta cataria* is the catnip beloved by cats, but is also the one that spreads most easily and is prone to getting weedy. *Nepeta faassennii* and *Nepeta racemosa* are better behaved and have showier flowers.



Basil

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is also said to repel house flies and mosquitoes and ticks! A basil insect repellent spray can be made by steeping four to six ounces of fresh basil leaves in four ounces of boiling water for several hours and then mixing the tea with four ounces of alcohol. Basil has not one, but four of the mosquito-repellent volatiles! Fresh basil is certainly one of my favorite culinary herbs. Knowing that keeping pots of it around might make for fewer flying pests makes it all the better! And if you have a sunny window sill, you might be able to keep pots of it all year long!

Thanks to National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, greensprays.com, britannica.com, sciencedirect.com and several others.