

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

February 15th through March 15, 2011



Early spring indoors?

February 28 *Morning of Horticulture will be held at the Espousal Center, 554 Lexington Street, North Waltham (off Route 95, Exit 27A) at 10 am.* This month's program will feature the "Pollinator Garden" with Kim Smith of the Arnold Arboretum. For additional details, please check last month's Posy Picker.

March 8 *The North Andover Garden Club has invited our club members to attend a "Flower Arranging Demonstration with Priscilla Styer."* This presentation will be held at the North Parish Church, 190 Academy Road, North Andover from 7 to 9 pm. You will remember that Priscilla was our guest at the Joint Meeting of the five area garden clubs at the Emerson Center in 2009.

March 9 *The Topsfield Garden Club has invited our members to join them at their meeting at the Gould Barn at 9:30 am. Susan Stowe of Hill Street will present a program on Daylilies.*

March 15 *Our next board meeting will be held at the home of Nat Anderson at 9:30 am.*

March 16-20 *The 2011 Boston Flower & Garden Show will be held at the Seaport World Trade Center. This year's theme is "A Burst of Color: Celebrating the Container Garden."* In addition to all that you will see, there will be lectures and demonstrations, and the many vendors will feature hundreds of new products to purchase. Tickets are \$20.00, \$17.00 for seniors, and are available locally at Corliss Brothers Garden Center, Ipswich, and at the door. For more information, go to www.paragonexpo.com.

March 20 *The Lazy Daisy Gardeners of Chelmsford have invited us to attend a special chocolate tasting fundraiser called "A Chocolate Extravaganza, A Tasting Experience" to be held from 2 to 4:30 pm at the Trinity Lutheran Church, 170 Old Westford Road, Chelmsford.* The featured speaker will be Rebecca Scheier of Tie Your Apron Culinary Events and Classes. Tickets are \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children, and can be purchased at the door or by calling Gail Langner at 978-256-6907.

March 22



Our next regular meeting is our Conservation Meeting for this year, which will be held at 9:30 am at the Gould Barn, Topsfield. The program is "Honey Bees" featuring Randy Johnson from the Essex County Beekeepers Association. We will learn more about the current bee colony collapse disorder, and how we can help these important plant pollinators. This meeting is open to the public free of charge.

...more news on the following page...



Notes



As you know, many of us purchased the much sought after official New Meadows Garden Club apron last year, and have enjoyed wearing it at some of our club functions, and even at home during gardening and cooking chores. Jean Bilsbury reports that there are a few left for those of you who either don't have one as yet, or would like another. They are still only \$18.00, so please give Jean a call if you are interested in purchasing one.

*The Northern District Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, April 14, 2011 at the Andover Country Club. President Rose Ann and Vice President Judy will be attending and would be very happy if some of you decide to join them. This meeting is open to any club member. For a registration fee of just \$38.00 dollars, you will have an opportunity to enjoy a wonderful morning speaker, who this year will be **Bill Cullina, the plant and garden curator of the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens**. He has authored several gardening books, and will be available for book signings. You will enjoy boutique shopping, a buffet luncheon and a Floral Interpretations Exhibit in the afternoon. And best of all, we will have an opportunity to spend a nice day with each other. Please contact Rose Ann for a Registration Form. The Registration deadline is April 7, 2011.*

...And, our Artistic Committee has asked us to mark our calendars for our very special Artistic Meeting, which will be our program "Art in Flowers" at the Topsfield Library on Thursday, May 19, 2011. Very soon, Co-Chair Jean Bilsbury will be looking for volunteers to put together beautiful designs which will be displayed throughout the library. Be ready to sign up, and treat the Town to a beautiful event!

*Here is something very special that was sent to me during the month that I thought you would like to see. As you know, each State in the Union has its own State Flower. Ours is the *Mayflower*. Jacquie Lawson, who fashions e-cards for all occasions, has put each State Flower into the design pictured at right under the heading "America the Beautiful." To take a look at how this is all put together, go to JacquieLawson.com, click on "more e-cards" in the left column, then choose US Patriot—America the Beautiful, and preview the card!*



Here is a news flash for you! Thanks to a lot of capable work on the part of Topsfield Garden Club's Martha Morrison, the five area garden clubs have a beautiful new website. Please take a look at it at www.tritowngardenclubs.org. Many thanks to Martha for a job very well done.

...bits and pieces on the next page...

...Bits and pieces...

The season has been a bit “sleepy”, but here’s proof that your New Meadows Garden Club Board never, ever sleeps!

*Here we are busy at work bright and early at
Barbara Shade’s home on February 15th!
Thanks for the photo, Barbara!*



Green Thumb Corner

...And now, first things first. I know that many of you have acquired at least one amaryllis plant over the holidays. The beautiful blossoms are always a perfect finishing touch to our holiday decorations, aren't they? Since we have this in common, I would like to tell you about two amaryllis plants I acquired from my mother-in-law about 15 years ago. This year's photo of one of them is to the right. This plant, as well as the other, which is white, bloom every year. It is so simple to bring this beauties back into bloom, I thought I'd review with you how to do it...I know that you can! (I am sure we have talked about this before, but it is really worth repeating!)



Here are your simple instructions: when the blooms fade (yours probably have already), cut off the tubular flower stems near the top of the bulb, leaving the foliage to continue growing. Water as you do your house-plants, and apply water soluble fertilizer every four weeks. *After the danger of frost has passed in the spring*, place your plant outside. Eventually you would like your plant in a sunny place for the summer, but be sure to expose your amaryllis to sun very gradually, otherwise, like you, it will get a sunburn, which is not a good thing. It's a good idea to bring the plant out on a cloudy day and place it in a spot that only gets a bit of sun on a bright day. Every week, move it to a spot that gets sun for a longer period during the day, until you finally have it in your sunniest spot. Continue to fertilize during the summer.

At the end of summer, and before frost, bring your pot of amaryllis inside and place the pot on its side in a cool spot...an unheated basement is perfect...someplace that is dark and where the temperature stays around 50 to 55 degrees. The pot is placed on its side so that any water will drain out, and the soil will dry off. No watering now! In about 6 to 8 weeks, cut off the leaves, which will have dried, and bring the pot back to a warm, bright place. You may repot at this time, but I have found that this is not always necessary. You may also replace the top few inches of soil. Resume watering and the growth cycle will begin anew. Remember to keep turning the pot regularly to make the stalk grow straight up, since the stalks have a tendency to grow toward the light. Good luck, my friends, and if you have any questions, you know where to find me!



Here is a hint spotted by Nat Anderson in Yankee Magazine for growing perfect paper-whites...maybe too late for this year, but early enough for next! I'm sure most of you know how leggy these get...it's really a shame to have to tie them up to keep them upright, but here is the solution: give them a drink of gin! Gin, or even vodka, whiskey, tequila or plain old rubbing alcohol stunts their growth, and they bloom more in scale with their

*stalks. (Do you suppose this happens to people too?) So here's what to do: when the bulbs are up three inches, water with a half a shot of gin mixed in 8 ounces of water. Do this again at the next watering. Isn't it amazing what we learn in garden club? **Thanks so much for passing this on, Nat!***

...more Green Thumb on the following page...



...And here's another bit of information Linda Harvey has kindly passed on to all of us from Garden Gate Magazine. Here's the question: I see slow-release fertilizer capsules on top of my soil. They don't seem to dissolve in the soil...are they working? And the answer: What we are seeing are the empty shells of the capsules that held the fertilizer. After the fertilizer is released, the capsules can last a long time, but eventually do dissolve. The capsules dissolve and release fertilizer at different speeds. It is best to mix the capsules into the soil so they dissolve faster. Empty fertilizer capsules will float when you water the container, but the full ones won't. At last the answer to one of my personal gardening mysteries! **Thanks so much for letting us know about this, Linda.**



After a winter such as we have been experiencing thus far, wouldn't it be fun, and probably good therapy as well, to bring a little of spring indoors to cheer us up? Why not try forcing some stems from your outdoor woody plants? Here's how: Some of the easiest plants to force are forsythia (at left), pussy willow, crabapple (on page 1) and flowering quince. Having gone through all this cold weather, these plants should be just about ready to bloom if given the right conditions indoors. Ready? Collect your branches on a day that is above 32 degrees. Cut stems up to three feet in length, and place them in a bucket of water. Bring the bucket inside, and soak the branches in warm water (warm bath temperature, perhaps in the tub) for several hours. This

will make sure that the stems and buds are fully hydrated. Now, place the branches in a clean container filled with a warm preservative solution, and place in bright light and as much humidity as possible. The floral preservative performs two functions: it prevents bacterial growth in the water, and provides nutrients for the branches. Watch the water level in the container, since the branches will lose water as they develop and water will need to be added a few times a week.

One tip when forcing pussy willows...remove the scales from the buds!

The time required for bloom will depend on the plant itself, your indoor conditions and how late in winter the branches are cut. Less time is required for branches that are cut later in the season. Most woody plants will remain in flower for about a week before the blooms start to fade.

Here are some plants to try in addition to those listed above: flowering plum and cherry, lilac and dogwood.



Lucky us...we have finally had some snow melt the last few days. Did you know that there are clues in melting snow? Look in your yard. If yours is like mine, disregarding areas over your septic tank, and where you have made piles after clearing walkways, you will notice that the snow in some areas melts faster than in others. These microclimates are

the sunniest and warmest planting spots in your garden. This information is important to us for future plantings since these warmer areas might be good choices for more tender plants or those that are just marginal plants in our growing zone. So take a look around before all the snow is gone! Wishful thinking, right?

February is merely as long as is needed to pass the time until March.

...Dr. J. R. Stockton...