

# A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club  
Topsfield, Massachusetts

February 23rd through March 22, 2016

The objectives of the New Meadows Garden Club shall be to foster knowledge of home gardening, decorative arrangements and an interest in civic projects.



What is a shamrock?

The word comes from the Irish "seamrog," meaning "little clover." Since there are over 300 species of clover, who knows which is the correct one?

February 23



Our next regular membership meeting will be held at the Gould Barn at 11:30 am. Please note that this is a change in time of day! Our program will show us "How to Use Herbs for Health and Beauty" and will be presented by Linda Sessa. Come with your bagged lunch. Our hostess committee will provide the beverages and a light dessert. Guests are welcome.

**\*\*Hostesses are Shirley Holt and Sandy Whelan**

March 15

Our next board meeting will be held in the meeting room at the Topsfield Town Library at 10 am.

March 16—March 20



The Boston Flower and Garden Show will be held at the Seaport World Trade Center. This year's theme is "Nurtured by Nature." Gardening is enjoyed by so many of us, and is so much anticipated at this dreary time of year. This event will be an indoor celebration of the bountiful benefits of the garden. We are invited to learn how to keep our gardens growing strong, and, in so doing, keep ourselves growing strong as well!

\*\*\*March 19\*\*\*



Grow Spring! EXPO will be held at the Emerson Center and Gould Barn in Topsfield from 10 am to 3 pm. This exciting, now annual, event is being sponsored by the Topsfield Garden Club, the Essex Agricultural Society (The Topsfield Fair) and the Topsfield Historical Society, and will be bigger and better this year! Thirty vendors have already signed up to participate and the number grows daily! This has become a much appreciated public service for local businesses and non-profit

organizations, providing them with an excellent opportunity to share with all of us what they do. Local farmers, beekeepers, crafters, horticultural experts and local businesses in the food industry will all be represented, as well as the three garden clubs of Topsfield and the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts. Some will be selling their products. The public is invited to attend at no charge. What better way to spend a March day? And, if you work up an appetite, lunch will be available for purchase in the barn from Cardeli's Café & Deli, as well as desserts and beverages from other participating local businesses. For those of you interested, tastings will also be available from a local winery and a local brewery. This very special event is not to be missed, and remember to buy local.

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

March 22



The Wardian Case

*Our regular membership meeting will be held at the Gould Barn at 6:30 pm and is our Horticulture Meeting for this year. Our special speaker will be Sean Ward, who grew up working in a greenhouse for his Dad and Grandfather, continuing a 250 year history of horticulture in his family. Some of you may know Sean...he owns the Peirce Farm at Witch Hill in Topsfield, a new beautiful event venue in town. It is Dr. Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, an ancestor of Sean's, who experimented with what became known as the "Wardian Case," which allowed plants to thrive in glass cases in places where they would have difficulty surviving at all. This ultimately led to the use of terrariums and inspired the creation of the aquarium. Sean will be telling us about his famous ancestor, and will also share with us his personal experimentation with the Wardian Case.*

**\*\*Hostesses: Linda Flynn, Ann Moorman and Susan Peterson**

## NOTES



► **Save the date!** The Northern District Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 10, 2016 at the Andover Country Club from 9 AM to 2 PM. An exciting day is planned for us with an environmental flair. The keynote speaker will be Marty Jessel, who will speak on the important topic of "Protecting Pollinators." Following lunch, the afternoon program will feature Shirley Smith, who will tell us about Ava Anderson quality products for the home and body, made without harmful chemicals. More details will follow as they become available, so mark your calendars!



*Here's exciting news! The front cover of the current early spring issue of Country Gardens Magazine features a garden many of you may have already been to see. It is the passion of Paula and Larry Guilbault on Ipswich Road, Boxford. Their home is the beautiful Victorian with the magnificent gardens on the annual garden tour in our neck of the woods. Their garden is featured in an article beautifully written by Tovah Martin and photographed by professional photographer and member of the Topsfield Garden Club, Kindra Clineff. This is quite an honor for the Guilbaults. Congratulations to them for this recognition of their "labor of love." If you can find a copy of the magazine for yourself, it would be well worth getting!*

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

*...Bits and pieces...*

*Since January is a quiet month for our garden club, I discovered that I have no new photos to share with you as I usually do in this section of our newsletter! Boo-hoo, what to do? Then an idea sprang into my mind! ►*



*So, here it is. Unless I miss my guess, Jane Cullinan, our club's designer at this year's Art In Bloom event at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston will soon be attending the exhibitor's meeting for the participating garden club designers. There is a bus trip being planned for our members to see her creation, and all the others in this spectacular show, on Sunday May 1, 2016...keep your schedules open. With all of this in mind, I thought it might be nice to take a "walk down memory lane" and peek at previous designs our members have created for this event. So, here are some photos I have in my files from recent years that I'd like to share with you...*

*Art In Bloom, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



*Mary Dalton, 2009*



*Barbara Shade 2010*



*Rita Galvin 2011*



*Stefani Mahr 2012*



*Barbara Shade 2013*



*Mei Schuster 2014*



*Margo Maione 2015*

*...the Green Thumb Corner follows...*



## Green Thumb Corner

*Today, whether you're ready or not, we are going to chat a little about Death Valley. I'm sure most of you have heard of it, and perhaps some of you have even been there. I have never had the opportunity to travel there myself, but maybe I'll add it to my to-do list. **Death Valley** is a desert basin surrounded by mountains located in eastern California. It is not only the lowest place in North*



*Ubehebe Crater in Death Valley*



*Parched Death Valley landscape*

*America at 282 feet below sea level, it is also the driest place and holds the record as the hottest place in the world. Supposedly, the hottest temperature recorded there was 134 degrees Fahrenheit back in 1913. It is interesting that Death Valley is a mere 85 miles as the crow flies from Mount Whitney, the highest point in the contiguous United States.*

*Geologically, 500,000 million years ago, Death Valley was the site of a warm, shallow sea, which seems a far cry from what exists there today. Scientists have determined that Death Valley lies near an*

*area where two plates in the Earth's crust meet. As these plates moved in relation to each other down through the millions of years that followed, the terrain was changed, forming mountains, and eroding them at times. In addition, there has been considerable volcanic activity in the area, covering Death Valley with layers of ash and cinders, forming craters when hot, molten material comes in contact with groundwater. All of this continuous activity resulted in slipping the valley floor downward, which continues today, at the same time as the mountains rise ever higher. At the same time, climate change has evaporated most of the lake system that existed after the last Ice Age. And, so, Death Valley exists during our lifetimes as a barren, hot, unforgiving yet beautiful desert basin still in transition.*

*To get an idea of what it might feel like to be in Death Valley, imagine the floor of the valley shimmering in the heat day after day. The air is very clear and dry, and the sky, except for a wisp here or there, is deep blue. Rain rarely gets past the mountains to the west. Because the valley is surrounded by mountains, the air is continuously heated by the sun as it circulates inside, somewhat like a convection oven, allowing little cloud formation. I doubt whether many of us could dress comfortably for this environment!*

*And yet, as we speak, Death Valley is awash in yellow and pink windflowers...a rare "super-bloom," which hasn't happened since 2005...this is the most exciting part of our chat today!!!! Why and how has this happened? Enter El Niño. I am sure you have heard much talk about El Niño this year. This refers to the warming of the ocean water in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific Ocean. This changes weather patterns on land since it causes a shift in the jet stream. I am sure you have heard about the parade of storms the folks on the west coast have had this winter, as well as our neighbors to the south. Some of these storms have been quite violent. And you can probably thank El Niño for our warmer than normal winter...thus far...and the colder than normal temperatures down south. Anyway, getting back to Death Valley where this all started, as a result of the El Niño weather pattern, in October there was an astonishing amount of rain...approximately 1 1/2 inches. That doesn't sound like a lot to us here in New England, but to Death Valley, it was almost a whole year's worth of rainfall all at once.*

*But where did the flowers come from in such a harsh and severe environment? Amazingly, more than 1000 kinds of plants live in Death Valley. The ones that live on the valley floor survive in various ways. Some have roots that go down 10 times an average person's height. Some have root systems that lie just below the surface but extend for great distances in all directions. Still others have skins that allow very little evaporation in this parched climate. The wildflower seeds rest, awaiting the infrequent rain to help them spring to life. And they have done just that in the last few weeks as a result of the rains last October.*

*...continued on the next page...*



*And so, here is a little peek at nature in all its glory transforming Death Valley into a Valley of Life:*



*Desert Gold Wildflowers*



*Evening Primrose*



*Notchleaf Phacelia*



*No crack is small enough.  
Nature overcoming every obstacle!*



*Five Spot Wildflower*



*Color where there was none before.*

*If you enjoyed looking at these photos and would like to see more, go the following address:*

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJbcWFTBn08](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJbcWFTBn08)



*And, closer to home, do you have a lot of broken branches on your trees as a result of the heavy, wet snow we had a few weeks ago? Did you know that a thaw is a perfect time to do some pruning, even at this time of year? Here are some good reasons: you can get ahead of the spring gardening rush, insects that carry spores of lethal diseases that can spread to a pruned tree are dormant now, and*

*less sap is apt to ooze from trees that bleed like maples, birch, elm and beech. Here's what to do: first of all, do not prune in wet weather. Pruning when it is wet may encourage fungal diseases. Watch the weather, and when you hear that a thaw is coming, get your tools ready. Now, what is the ideal thaw? A thaw is characterized by daytime temperatures above freezing and nighttime temps in the high 20's. Try to get three days of this in a row, and prune on the first day or second day. If you do this, the cut branch will have enough time to acclimate to its suddenly exposed condition and harden off. On the other hand, if this is done when temperatures are frigid, the exposed cells at the end will most probably end up as dead cells rather than sealed-over wood. So, watch the weather, primp your trees and enjoy the opportunity to be outside! ♣*

