

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

January 20th through February 17, 2015



The Carnation is January's flower, symbolizing love, fascination and distinction. Carnation is sometimes called Gillyflower.

*Congratulations to our newest Honorary Member,
Jean Ziegler!*

February 6



Our club and our sister club, The Topsfield Garden Club, will sponsor "Think Spring" Gardens, a very special event featuring local growers, garden resource providers and sustainability groups, to be held at the Emerson Center, 9 East Common Street, Topsfield from 5 pm to 9 pm.

There will be something for everybody interested in ecology, healthy food, beautiful flowers, with advice on how to grow your own vegetables and flowers from about 25 guest exhibitors. The experts will provide information on how to start a flower or vegetable garden, you will be able to sign up for CSA shares, learn about unique sources of seeds, plants and gardening needs, learn about honey bees, and even hear about Topsfield's Giant Pumpkins! There will also be a presentation by Master Gardener Lillabeth Wies at 7 pm entitled *Permaculture: Seven Layers to Success*. Our VP and Program Chair Shirley Holt is very excited about this event, as well she should be, and it is not to be missed! Admission is free and open to the public with a light supper of homemade soup, bread and sweets available for a nominal fee.

***Since our club is a sponsor of this event, we are asking that all of our members get involved in some way. Our club will be responsible for providing small, easy to handle desserts for the 125 or so people expected to attend.*



Our Hostess Committee headed by Sandy Whelan and Agnes Salvatore has put out a call for members to provide these goodies, and would appreciate if you contacted them with what you will bring. They also would be grateful for help with a centerpiece for their table! Volunteers will also be needed to help set up around 4 pm and to help clean up after the event's conclusion. Also needed are members to tend our dessert table and the club's informational table. Further details will follow, I am sure...be on the lookout for them, and please don't hesitate to lend a hand!

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

February 10



The North Andover Garden Club will sponsor *“Discovering New England Stone Walls”* presented by Kevin Gardner at 7 pm at St. Michael’s Church, 196 Main Street, North Andover. Kevin's informal talk covers the history, technique, stylistic developments, and aesthetics of the wonderful stone walls in our area. He explains how and why New England came to acquire its thousands of miles of stone walls, the ways in which they and other dry stone structures were built, how their styles emerged and changed over time, and their significance to the famous New England landscape. Along the way, Kevin occupies himself building a miniature wall. Copies of his book *“The Granite Kiss”* will be available for purchase.

February 17

Our next board meeting will be held at the Topsfield Town Library Meeting Room at 10:00 am.

NOTES



One last look at this year’s stunning outdoor holiday decorations!

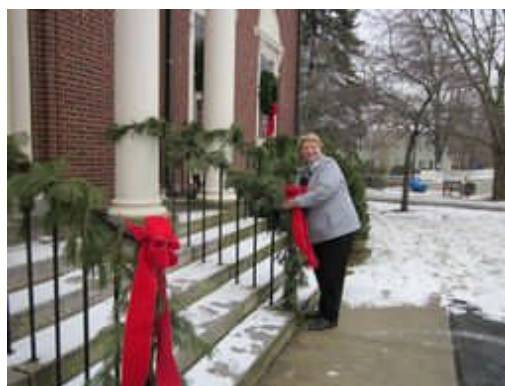


Time to pack our beautiful wreaths away for another year.

Many thanks from the Artistic Committee to all those who helped decorate the Topsfield Town Library for the holiday season this year. And many thanks to those who helped “un-decorate” as well, including Co-Chair Rose Ann’s husband and son who “manned” the ladder!



The merry “un-decorating” crew!



Rose Ann readies the exquisite bows for storage.

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

And, a little Groundhog Day tidbit: As you probably already know, on this day, farmers predicted the weather for the following six weeks by observing whether the resident groundhog came out of hibernation, saw his shadow and then returned to his burrow. If he did, winter would continue. Well, in England and France, it was a bear who brought this news, and it was a badger in Germany. When Germans emigrated to Pennsylvania in the 1800's, they couldn't find any badgers, but they did find lots of groundhogs, so the rest is history! Now, all the excitement is building once again because Groundhog Day is just around the corner on February 2nd...can you stand it???

...Bits and pieces...

Thank you, Pat Gagnon and Mary Landry for a fine holiday workshop for the Topsfield Council on Aging!



The ladies are busy creating their holiday centerpieces!



Is Lorraine Erickson having fun or what?

...more on the following page...



Our Holiday Social at the Bradford Tavern, December 2014



The club confers Honorary Membership on longtime member, Jean Ziegler.

Green Thumb Corner

Well, as I sit at my computer and look out the window at all the “white” that is now covering the ground, and anticipating the forecasted blizzard for Monday night through Wednesday morning, I guess I will have to admit that winter is here. For me it has been very nice not having too much snow since winter official began back in December. I have never been a skier, and in fact really don’t even like winter. I would much rather be out in my garden passing the time of day. What to do???

*An easy antidote to my winter doldrums which comes to my mind at this moment is to bring my garden indoors. One of the ways to do this would be to put together a **Pot et Fleur** for myself. Many of you will remember the super workshop Artistic Co-Chair Rose Ann and our dear Georgia McHugh treated us to a couple of years ago. All that’s needed is a trip to your favorite garden center...a treat in itself these days. Pick up a few houseplants, a few flower stems, and if you have a container kicking around, in they go. Instant inside garden!*



...more Green Thumb on the next page...



Or, how about starting an indoor herb garden? You love the scent of herbs, don't you? It is certainly hard to beat homegrown herbs. Think about how delightful it would be to pick a few to liven up your dishes this winter...how about some for your cup of tea, as you cradle the cup to warm those cute little hands of yours? Does this sound good to you? If it does, here are a few tips on growing the best herbs in town:

The first and most important factor in growing herbs inside is light. This is probably the most limiting factor during the short and dark days of winter. The best place for your garden is in windows that face south or southwest providing at least five to six hours of good light. Some herbs, such as chives, parsley and mint can be placed in east or west facing windows, but should still get four to five hours of good light. Of course, there are always grow lights available if you are really serious about this.

Space is another consideration. Of course, with regular harvesting, you can keep your plant's size under control. If you have limited space, maybe growing one or two herbs, which you use a lot, is the way to go.

And, what about temperature and moisture? Most herbs prefer daytime temperatures between 65 and 70 degrees, with nighttime temperatures at least 10 degrees lower. While a good place for your herbs is close to a window so that they can get good light, be careful that the plants do not touch the icy cold window...they won't like this one bit! And for some herbs, your inside air during winter may be too dry, just like it is for us! Additional moisture can be provided by misting or placing the herb's pot onto a saucer or tray full of pebbles that you can fill with water. The reasoning here is that while the water in the saucer evaporates, humidity is being added to the air around the plant. Nice, don't you think? You may be very surprised how often you have to fill the saucer with water!

Maybe I should say a few words about the containers and potting soil for your herbs. Just about any container is good, provided it has drainage holes. For good growth a bigger pot is better than a smaller one. Clay is okay, but your herbs will dry out faster in clay than in a pot made from another material. I usually reserve clay for my succulents and cactus plants, and use plastic or ceramic for my other plants. The soil you use should be of good quality that has been formulated for indoor plants. It should hold enough water to keep your herbs happy, but should also be well draining because most herbs don't like wet feet. If the soil you choose does not already contain its own fertilizer, you will need to fertilize your herbs regularly, or use a diluted mixture of fertilizer and water every time you water your plant. But be careful not to over-fertilize your herbs. In winter your herb plants won't grow as actively as they do during summer, and so need less frequent feeding. We're not going for GIANT herbs here!

And, now the art of watering...how often you should water will depend on several factors...temperature, light and how fast your herbs are growing. Rather than on a fixed schedule, the best approach is to water only when the plant actually feels dry an inch or two down. I usually poke my finger into the soil to make this determination. Another trick is to lift the pot...if it feels lighter to you than usual, watering might be in order. This is a technique that takes a bit of practice but does work.

Oh, oh...what if you get bugs??? Spray your herb's leaves, tops and bottoms, with tepid, soapy water until they drip. You can buy organic sprays for this purpose as well. Happy gardening!

...more follows...

The Amaryllis Myth

You might recall that a year ago there was an extensive article about the beautiful Amaryllis Plant in *The Posy*. Today I would like to share with you a sweet story from Greek Mythology that I didn't share with you last time.



Once upon a time there was a very sensitive girl called Amaryllis. One day when she was on a mountainside picking flowers, she met the shepherd Alteo and immediately fell in love. But Alteo was not interested in girls, he only loved flowers. He had often said that: "Only the girl who can bring me a new flower will receive my love."

Amaryllis despaired and turned to the Oracle at Delphi for advice. There she was told to take an arrow from the temple and to wound herself with it in front of Alteo's house, and declare her love for him. If necessary she was told to repeat this action on the subsequent evenings. Amaryllis did what the oracle told her and when the clock struck midnight on the first evening, she resolutely stabbed her breast and her heart. It was as if her life was streaming out of her as she stood in front of Alteo's hut calling his name loudly and declaring that their lives were tied together. Unfortunately her actions had no effect.

So, on the next evening she repeated the scene. And again the evening after that. For thirty nights blood dripped before Alteo's door...until a miracle happened. On the spot where the blood had fallen, there was a large red flower with a wide open calyx. "Alteo, Alteo, here is the flower," called Amaryllis excitedly. Alteo saw the fragile girl with the thick and heavy stem in her hands, bearing the unfamiliar bright red flower of love. The rugged shepherd knelt before her and wept, and as they kissed for the first time, the larks sung high in the air.

Of course the new flower was named Amaryllis.

Happy Valentine's Day!

