

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

February 17th through March 24, 2015



The Primrose is February's flower, symbolizing modesty, virtue and distinction.

February 24



The Haverhill and Groveland Garden Clubs have invited us to join them at the 7th Spring Gardening Forum at Nunan Florist & Greenhouses at 6:30 pm. They are very excited to announce that their guest will be Tovah Martin, who is a nationally known speaker, author and master gardener. She will be presenting her program "Infusing the Garden with Personality." Tovah believes that if "you are what you eat, you dress for success, why not harness your garden as an expression of the inner you?" You will learn just what to do

to make your garden uniquely yours. Tovah Martin has so many impressive credentials, it is impossible to list them all here! Just suffice it to say that this is an event not to be missed. You will be bathed in 85 degree warmth and surrounded by beautiful plants that are certain to lift your spirits. All this while we look out of our crystal palaces at our frigid landscape, completely coated in white. The only thing better would be a free, all expenses paid vacation on a tropical island in the Caribbean! The sponsoring clubs request a donation of \$5.00, which will make guests eligible for door prizes, raffles and the opportunity to receive a 20 percent discount on your purchases, courtesy of Nunan's owner, Steve Flynn.

March 2



Horticulture Morning will be held at the Espousal Center, 554 Lexington Street, Waltham at 10 am to noon. The program will be "Container Gardening for All Occasions" presented by Tower Hill Botanic Garden Horticulture Director, Joann Vieira. She will share her secrets on making container gardens as glorious as those enjoyed by visitors to Tower Hill. A \$5.00 donation is requested at the door for club members and \$10.00 for non-member guests.

March 11 - March 15



The Boston Flower and Garden Show will be held at the Seaport World Trade Center, just in time to show us that there is a light at the end of this very snowy tunnel we are in. There will be something for everyone...gardens, the Plant Marketplace of course, a Container Garden Invitational, and floral designs and horticulture displays in the Amateur Division. All-in-all, a chance for a very nice day out with friends!

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

March 17

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

March 24



Our March regular membership meeting will be held at the Gould Barn, Topsfield at 7 pm. As seen on "The Victory Garden" on PBS, this month our Conservation Committee is pleased to invite you to a program presented by Bill Holt, owner of Willow Mist Grasses in Stratham, NH. As quoted on the web site at willowmist.com, ornamental grasses are "casually elegant and virtually carefree. Nothing will invite more compliments nor give you more pleasure than our field grown and area-proven ornamental grasses." Learn more on the web site, and do plan to join us at this special event. Your guests are welcome. **Hostesses for this meeting are Claudette Poor, Tammy Glasser and Linda Mann.*

NOTES



Here's important news from our Artistic Co-Chair, Rose Ann Waite..."on Thursday April 30th, 2015 at 6:30 pm, New Meadows Garden Club will once again hold a flower show at the Topsfield Town Library. This year our show, Art in Flowers, will be dedicated to the memory of our dear member, mentor and friend, Georgia McHugh.

As many of you may already know, this flower show is not judged. I am looking for 15 volunteers to create designs for the show. This has been a huge success in the past, so please sign up for this year's event. You will be able to choose your art piece at our March meeting.

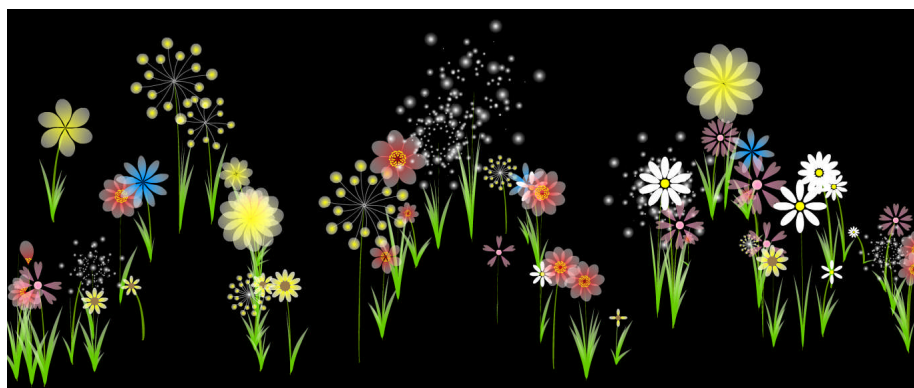
As always your Artistic Committee will be there to guide you. I will once again open my home to anyone who would like to come and do her design on the entry day. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give me a call. I am looking forward to making this our best show ever to honor Georgia's memory!"



► **Save the date!** The Northern District Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday April 29, 2015 at the Andover Country Club from 9 AM to 3 PM. Featured will be Floral Designer, Bert Ford who will present his program "Spin on Spring" Also, Farmer Dave will tell us about Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSA) in his presentation "More Than You Can Imagine." Plus, we've been promised that there will be much, much more. More details will follow soon. Come, have lunch and enjoy the company!

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

As you know, there's not much we who brave the New England winters can do with our gardens right about now. Matter-of-fact, with all this snow on the ground, one can't tell where our gardens are or whether we have gardens at all! There is hope, though, because we know that spring does always eventually come, and the beauty of nature awakens, much to our delight. Until that magic moment though, here's a little something that might help you pass a little time: for those of you who have FLASH on your computers and other electronic devices, the web site http://www.procreo.jp/labo/flower_garden.swf will allow you to put together your very own flower garden with the tap of your mouse. Please note that there is an "underscore" symbol in the web address between the word "flower" and the word "garden." One of my little garden creations is pictured below. Ah, the wonders of the electronic age!



...Bits and pieces...



*Remembering the "Think Spring" Expo
Emerson Center, Topsfield
February 6, 2015*



February is a quiet month in these parts, but the Topsfield and New Meadows Garden Clubs livened things up with thoughts of spring by co-sponsoring this community event, featuring more than 20 agricultural exhibitors from Essex County and other nearby communities. This was the second annual event of this kind, but the first time our club has been involved, thanks to the invitation from the Topsfield Garden Club, which initiated this event in February 2014. We all learned a great deal from the exhibitors, who told us about their services and answered our questions.

...more on the following page...

Looking back, we remember the weather was just frigid, with ice and snow everywhere, and we were anticipating yet another snow storm. In spite of the weather, we did have a good crowd. More would surely have attended if conditions were better, we are sure. It was so appropriate this year to offer those who attended delicious, warm soups...lentil and winter vegetable with delicious bread...all for a modest fee. Refills were on the house! A nice idea from our sister club! And with it came desserts thanks to our members who brought the goodies. In addition, this year, attendees had the opportunity to be present at a lecture on the benefits of permaculture farming presented by Lillabeth Wies. A good time was truly had by all!

Many thanks go to the Topsfield Garden Club, who conceived of this event, and invited our club to participate with them this year. We are grateful for their ideas, and for pointing us in the right direction. Many thanks also to our Program Chair, Shirley, and those who worked with her and the Topsfield Garden Club to bring this event to life. Thanks to Sandy Whelan and her committee for the work in the kitchen and for the beautiful dessert table. Many thanks to Rose Ann for the lovely flower/vegetable designs she created for our tables. And thank you to Claudette Poor and Barbara Shade for the nifty bags they created for attendees to gather their exhibit flyers. And we must not forget to thank Mary Connor and her assistants, who created the great poster highlighting our club's activities, which greeted attendees as they arrived. As you can see, there are so many to thank, probably even more than I mention here...without them, this event could not have been as successful as it was. Thank you everyone for a job very well done.♥

And now, the pictures!



Our welcome table.



Rose Ann's table design.



The Committee!



The dessert table.



The bags!



Time out for some soup!



Watching the crowd.

...the green thumb follows...

Green Thumb Corner

Introducing James J. H. Gregory, The Seed King



At this time of year, when there is little we can do in our gardens except worry about winter damage, many of us get "itchy" and start looking at seed catalogs as a way to assure ourselves that spring will come again...hopefully someday soon! With this in mind, I thought it

*would be appropriate to say a few words about a local hero in the world of seeds. For those of you who do not already know of him, I would like to introduce you to **James John Howard Gregory**. He was born in Marblehead in 1827 and graduated from Amherst college in 1850. He spent a brief period early on teaching at the Farm School in Marblehead and was Principal of Derby Academy in Hingham, which still exists today.*

But, he realized that his life's calling was elsewhere, and his love for agriculture brought him into the business of developing and growing improved varieties of vegetables for harvesting and for the sale of seeds. Mr. Gregory provided housing for his farm workers, but did not pay them. Each employee instead kept an hourly count on the honor system and on payday took what was due him from the farm stand cash drawer.

And here's the very interesting part...not only did the Gregory Seed Farm exist in his native Marblehead, but it also consisted of 400 acres along Gregory, Maple and East Streets in Middleton. If you shop at Farmer Brown's, you know just where this land is! Gregory Street starts at Maple Street where Howe's Station is located, and proceeds through the beautiful farmland shared with Danvers, then through a residential area where the street ends at Route 1. Obviously the street was named for James Gregory, and there is another named for him in Marblehead.



On the Middleton farm, Mr. Gregory developed famous vegetables still popular today. He bred and released an improved Blue Hubbard squash, and also developed the first Cherry Tomato. Also credited to Mr. Gregory is the Danvers Half-long Carrot, pictured to the right, and the Danvers Onion. I am sure



some of you are aware that the Town of Danvers used to be known as Salem Village, but did you know that the nickname for Danvers is "Onion Town?" You can thank James Gregory for that! And, Danvers Half-long carrot seeds are still available from seed companies to this day.

When James Gregory was not at work developing and improving seeds, he found time to serve as a Selectman in Marblehead and as a State Senator. He also served as vice president of the Essex County Agricultural Society for several years. In addition, Mr. Gregory served as a Library trustee and on the Building Committee for Abbot Hall, which is Marblehead's Town Hall and Historical Museum. The clock and bell in the tower of the Hall was a gift from Mr. Gregory.

He also dedicated his life to philanthropy and social betterment. He only took enough payment from his seed farming business to support his modest life style, and donated the balance to charities. Out of concern for education of young people, he donated over 30,000 books to over fifty southern black colleges. On a very local level, after his squash was harvested and the seeds removed, the remaining edible parts were put outside the "squash house" with a sign inviting anyone in need to take what they required. He also provided free bread at "bread stations" in Marblehead during the economic downturns in the late 19th century.

...more follows...

James Gregory donated Bailey's Head, now known as Fountain Park to the town of Marblehead so "all could see a panoramic view of the town he loved so much." There is so much more...not enough room here to share it all!

James John Howard Gregory died on February 20, 1910 and is buried in the Waterside Cemetery in Marblehead. In his will, he established an ongoing "Gregory Fund," which provides every family who gives birth to twins a new carriage!

Today, one of the houses built by Mr. Gregory as housing for farm hands still stands on Gregory Street in Middleton. Vegetable gardening is still done there

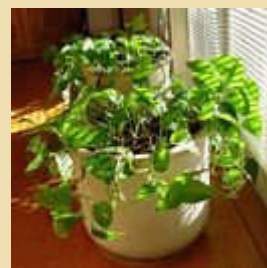
on a much smaller scale. Middleton farmer, Paul Richardson, set some of this land aside during the 1980's for community gardens and Middleton residents can now grow their own vegetables and flowers there.

I find it truly amazing to learn about those who have gone before us in our special part of the world, especially those as inspirational as James John Howard Gregory. I hope you do too.



We're pretty deep into winter now (in more ways than one), so it's probably about time to give your houseplants a checkup! Here's what to do:

Check for yellow leaves. Sometimes this is due to too much water. Many houseplants are semi-dormant during winter and don't require as much water as they do in summer. Clip off the affected leaves and hold back on watering until the soil feels dry. Hopefully this will solve the problem.



Check your plants for dead or shabby foliage. It is best to clear these away to prevent fungal or other diseases. It's similar to making up your face before you meet your public!

Check your saucers...if you are using terra-cotta, excess moisture could damage what is underneath. To head this off, you can either place cork coasters available at garden centers under your terra-cotta saucer, or switch to waterproof saucers.

Check for dust on foliage. This can interfere with the plant's photosynthesis and transpiration processes and also can sometimes provide a place for insects to hide! You can spray smaller plants at the kitchen sink. Larger plants can go in the shower, or you can wipe the tops and undersides of leaves with a soft dust cloth.

Check for dry, brittle leaves. Just as your skin is drier during winter months from indoor heating, your plants will also feel the effects. Try adding moisture to the air around your plants by setting the pots on pebble-filled saucers. You can also use a humidifier...that will be good for both you and your plants!

Check for long shoots at the top of your plants. It is better to clip some of these off to maintain a balance between the plant's roots, which grow slowly in winter, and its foliage. This will also help conserve the plant's resources, since it can be weakened by too much growth in winter.

And, last but certainly not least, check for pests on your plants. Look closely because they are sneaky! Mealybugs look like tiny puffs of cotton. These can be dabbed away with a rubbing alcohol-soaked cotton swab. Tiny brown "helmets" on stems might be scale. Just cut the stems right off. And, of course, tiny webs and dots may be the cursed spider mites. These can be washed away with a tepid shower of water.

Here's to happy plants!