

# A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

February 28th through March 28, 2017

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



*Like the carnation, which was last month's flower, violets date back to Ancient Greece. Violets are the symbol of Athens, and were used by the Greeks in wines, foods and medicines. Violets are the birth flower of those born in February.*

*And, a bit more about violets...there are between 400 and 500 species found in many corners of the world. There are around 60 species in our country, with the most common being the blue violet, or Viola sororia. Both their leaves and flowers are edible. They can be used in a variety of savory dishes, and the petals of the blossoms are commonly coated with sugar and used on cakes, chocolates and pastries. And even better, the flowers are actually fairly nutritious, containing high amounts of Vitamin C, more than most vegetables! Napoleon Bonaparte thought so much of violets that he declared them his signature flower, and used the blooms to cover his wife Josephine's grave when she died.*

## February 28



2016 Drought in Ipswich

*Our next regular membership meeting will be our Conservation meeting for this year and will be held at the Gould Barn at 12 pm. Our Conservation Committee Co-Chairs, Penny Rogers and Judy Donovan have lined up an exciting and very timely meeting for us. Our program guest will be Andi Ross of Andi's Garden Talks, who will present the program "Water, Water Everywhere" (How to Deal with Drought). We will learn how to understand one of our most precious natural resources - water, and how to collect it and optimize our soil for greatest water retention during times of drought. Your guests are welcome. Our business meeting will begin at 12 pm, followed by our program at 12:30 pm. The public is welcome and may make a small donation to defray the program cost.*

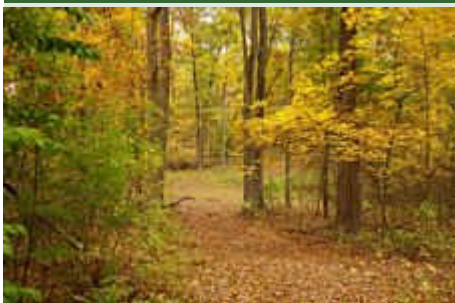
## March 6



*Rita Galvin will hold a Creative Design Class at the Gould Barn for interested members from 1 pm to 4 pm. For a cost of \$10.00, plant material and containers will be provided. Feel free to bring your own special container, if you wish! A bit of instruction and tips will be provided, and there will be light refreshments to keep your energy up. The cost is \$10.00. By March 2nd, please register with Sandy Whelan and forward the \$10.00 tuition to Rita Galvin to hold your place. So don't wait to sign up! And, whatever you do, don't forget your clippers.*

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

March 8



Trails and woodlands at Donibristle Farm

*Help Preserve an Historic Topsfield Landscape...the Donibristle Farm...by joining the Essex County Greenbelt and your neighbors and friends for a casual wine and cheese gathering at the Peirce Farm at Witch Hill, 116 Boston Street, Topsfield at 7:30 pm. Learn more about this worthwhile, grass-roots effort to permanently protect 44 acres of the beautiful wooded hillside located on Hill Street and Rowley Bridge Road in Topsfield. The Donibristle Farm will sound familiar to some members who have been in our club for a while since, in 1997, the estate house was the site for “An Evening at Donibristle Farm,” our very special in-club flower show, which won a State Award.*

*RSVP to [Alexandra@ecga.org](mailto:Alexandra@ecga.org), 978-768-7241, ext. 10 if you would like to attend. To learn more, go to:*

*[http://www.ecga.org/explore\\_our\\_properties/view\\_project/18-help\\_preserve\\_donibristle\\_farm](http://www.ecga.org/explore_our_properties/view_project/18-help_preserve_donibristle_farm)*

*\*\*On behalf of our club, your Executive Board, at its February Board Meeting, voted unanimously to make a donation to this worthy cause.*

March 18



*The Topsfield Garden Club will sponsor its Fourth Annual Grow Spring! EXPO from 10 am to 3 pm. Over 50 vendors and exhibitors, along with the Morris Dancers, food trucks, crafters, and a host of other participants will come together to celebrate agriculture, horticulture, conservation, preservation and our relationship to the land. This year, the event will take place in three historic buildings and surrounding outside areas adjacent to the Topsfield Town Common...the Emerson Center, the Gould Barn and The Commons.*

*\*\*Our club will be an exhibitor once again this year. Please mark your calendars for this exciting event, and be ready to lend a hand at our table.*

March 21

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

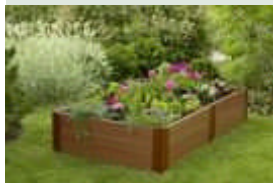
March 22—March 26



*The Boston Flower and Garden Show will be held at the Seaport World Trade Center. This year's theme is “Superheroes of the Garden.” Gardening is enjoyed by so many of us, and is so much anticipated at this dreary time of year. This event will honor the crusaders, innovative tools and legendary plants helping to make us all champions in the battle for garden supremacy!*

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

March 28



Our regular membership meeting will be held at the Gould Barn at 6:30 pm. This is our annual Horticulture Meeting and will feature Norman Russell, who will present his program "Raised Bed Gardening-Waking up the Garden." \*\*Northern District Director, Donna Vallois will be joining us as our special guest of the evening.

Our hostesses will be: Linda Flynn and Claudette Poor.

## NOTES



This year's **Northern District Annual Meeting** will be held at the Danversport Yacht Club on April 10th. This event is always a great opportunity for all of us to get together for a nice day. **Save the date!**

The Topsfield Library will be inviting the public to a special reception to view and celebrate our event, **Art In Flowers**, on Friday evening, April 28, 2017. **Save the date!**

## ...Bits and pieces...



Boston Public Garden 2013



Peabody Essex Museum 2012

Around town with the New  
Meadows Garden Club



Crane Estate 2015



Glen Magna 2010

...Green Thumb follows...



## Green Thumb Corner

*Who knew that there was so much to tell you about magnificent orchids? When I started this set of articles, I thought there would be just two installments! For those of you not too keen on houseplants, just hang in there, I am almost done!*



► **And now, a few “orchid housekeeping” issues!** Let’s talk about pruning first. Since, orchids are such beautiful plants, keeping them looking their best should be at the top of your list. Trimming orchids to remove old, spent leaves and flower stems is always a great idea...just like putting your makeup on before “meeting your public.” Pruning orchids properly will remove lots of old plant tissue that could potentially spread rot to other parts of the plant, or could harbor unwelcome pests. Different types of orchids require different pruning techniques.

So, let’s address **Phalaenopsis pruning**, since most of us are more familiar with this variety of orchid and are more likely to already own one. When pruning my orchids, I prefer to use sharp bonsai scissors. Some folks use razor blades, but whatever tool you prefer, make sure that it is sharp and sterile. Okay, let’s set the scene...your plant had a beautifully blooming stalk and now the blossoms, especially the ones at the bottom, are starting to dry out and drop off. Sad to see the blossoms fade, but it’s a fact of life! The good part is that these stalks stay in bloom for unbelievably long periods of time! **Here’s what to do:**

■ As they fade, cut back the flowers by making a clean even cut directly back to the main branch. Removing the blooms will not only keep your plant looking neat but will also energize it.

■ When all the flowers have faded, you can next do any one of the following:

- 1) Cut the stalk back to within an inch or two of the base of the plant, where the stalk sprouted. This will help the plant send its energy to growing new leaves and roots, making for a stronger plant. (figure 1)
- 2) Cut the stalk just under the point on the stem where the first flower sprouted. This sometimes encourages the plant to produce a side shoot that then re-blooms. The upside of doing this is that you may have more beautiful flowers in short order, but the downside is that the plant has no time to rest, and some of its energy for growth will be sapped. (figure 2)
- 3) You can also just leave the stalk alone and see what happens! If the stalk begins to turn yellow or brown, your plant is telling you that the stalk should be cut at its base. If you do not do this, it will dry out and possibly rot...not a good thing. (figure 3)



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

**And, now a bit about running a clean orchid operation!** We already know how great orchids plants are, but yet another advantage is that orchids are relatively pest-free plants. But it also helps to practice prevention techniques such as sterilizing your cutting tools, making regular pest inspections, providing good growing conditions to avoid creating stress on your plants, pulling weeds if they spring up and buying clean, healthy plants. That said, if you are a successful “orchid parent” and your plants are around long enough, you may have to deal with one invasion of pests or another. The offenders are the usual ones...aphids, mealy bugs, thrips, spider mites and scale. From our discussions in the past about houseplant maintenance, hopefully at this point you can recognize these “nasties” if they show up.

...more on the next page...

*Here's what to do:*

■Your first line of defense might be the use of the least toxic attack approach. Keep in mind that these need to be repeated more frequently because they tend to kill on contact and aren't residual on the plant. For aphids and spider mites, washing the leaves with a strong stream of warm water might do the trick. For mealy bugs and scale, a direct dab with a cotton swab drenched in isopropyl alcohol is your first line of defense. Neem, Horticultural Oil or Insecticidal soap are recommended for Thrips.

■If the first line of defense isn't doing the job, it might be time to take out "the big guns!" \*\*Please note that orchids can be delicate when it comes to chemical controls for pest infestations, so if you need to use them, be sure to read labels before applications to ensure they are safe for use on your plant and follow mixing and application instructions to the letter! For this purpose, try Insecticidal soap, Horticultural Oil or Neem for aphids, mealy bugs, scale and spider mites, or the strongest weapons, Malathion, Orthene or Sevin on any pest. Don't forget to apply liquid pest treatments to your plants when they are not in direct sunlight and when the temperature is less than 85 degrees. Always shade your plants until the solution is dried.

Another occasional threat to orchids are fungal or bacterial diseases. When these are present, you will observe circular or oblong spots on foliage or flowers. Sometimes the crown will turn black or rot, killing the plant. If you suspect that your plant is suffering from one of these diseases, application of the chemicals mentioned previously may help. Orchids can also fall prey to viruses. This is the worst of all because there is no cure. Symptoms are streaking or color breaks in the flower. The good news is that viruses are not too common.

When orchid euthanasia is recommended...unfortunately, sometimes in spite of all your attempts to battle a pest infestation or fungal, bacterial or viral disease, your plant is still sickly and extremely weakened and probably unlikely to recover. Better to say a few good words, and put the plant out of its misery. The reality is that this might be the best thing to do for any other plants you have since the disposal of the plant will eliminate the chance that the "plaque" will spread.

And, a finally tip! Aren't summer vacations great? We like them so much that, if we're lucky, we take them in the winter as well! Did you know that orchids like summer vacations too? Look at how happy the orchid plants look under the trees in the image at the right. My orchids can't wait until it's time to go outside each spring, and are very sad when it is time to come back inside the house in the fall. I feel that my plants perform much better during their time inside the house because they have spent the summer months in a shady corner on my deck.



►Here's what to do:

■First, and foremost, be sure not to bring your plants outside until the nighttime temperatures stay above 50 degrees! While some orchids can tolerate cooler temps than this, best not to stress your plants too much.

■Next, find a nice, shady place for your plants on your deck, porch or under a nice group of trees. Do not place your plants in direct sunlight...they will get sunburned, and never directly on the ground! The place on my deck that I use is on the north side of the house, and does get a bit of late afternoon sun. My hubby has provided a small framework made from small diameter PVC pipe over the benches for my orchids, to which I can attach plant shade material, keeping the direct sun from shining on my plants. Amazon.com is a good source for this shade material. The plants just love this, and I do too because they are much easier to take care of there...just a bit of watering, especially if it hasn't rained, and I don't even have to worry about getting water on the floor! Also, having my orchids outside affords me the opportunity to clean up the area they have been occupying while they were inside the house. It's a win-win!

■Once the nighttime temperatures start getting cooler in the fall, I do spray my orchids with Sevin to make sure I'm not bringing any pests in with them, and in they come, completing the cycle.

The last several months I have tried to tell you all I know about growing orchids. In so doing, I hope I have planted a seed of inspiration in you to join in my passion! As I said at the very beginning, if I was told I could keep only one plant in this world, it could only be an orchid...