

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

April 27th through May 23, 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.



The Daisy, is our flower for April. They belong to the family Asteraceae, which is a huge family of flowering plants, rivaled in size only by the orchid family. Daisies can be found everywhere in the world except Antarctica! Their name means "Day's Eye" referring to the way they

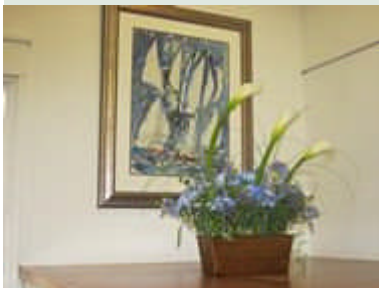
close their petals in the evening, and open again at dawn. Believe-it-or-not, Daisies are related to Chrysanthemums, Dahlias, Dandelions, Asters, Marigolds, Zinnias, Goldenrod, Tansy, Ageratum, Black-eyed Susan, Coneflower, Sunflower, and even Artichoke. The list is endless! The Victorians loved Daisies, which they believed signified innocence. The children of the time made daisy chains to wear as May Day crowns. Daisies are biennial plants, which means that their life ends after two years. But, have no fear, they propagate via their seed at the beginning of autumn. The blossom is actually two flowers in one. The yellow center's florets and the outer white ray florets in the Daisy pictured above are actually different blooms all rolled-up in one! Bees can't resist Daisies, and are their main pollinators. Daisy flowers and leaves are edible and are a rich source of Vitamin C, an excellent addition to your salads and soups! And, if you've ever played the game "He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not," you may be surprise to learn that the largest game ever played was by 331 people in Milan, Italy!

April 27



Arbor Day will be held at the Steward School, 261 Perkins Row, Topsfield at 9:15 am. As our club does each year, a tree will be donated and planted on the school grounds. You are invited to join in the celebration of this rite of spring with the children in Kindergarten through Grade 3.

April 27



*President, Shirley Holt's design
Art In Flowers 2015*

Our meeting, Art in Flowers, will be held at the Topsfield Library at 6:30 pm. Please note that this is a Thursday evening meeting. Twelve of our members will create very special designs to coordinate with the stunning art collection at the library, and these will remain on display until Saturday April 29th. This is an exclusive event planned by our Artistic Committee every two years, and is our club's gift to the community. Mark your calendars and plan to be there to see the beauty our designers will create.

► Northern District Director, Donna Vallois will be joining us as our special guest of the evening.

► Hostesses: Gerrie Bunker and Pat Gagnon

► And, once again this year, the Topsfield Town Library is planning a special reception for the public late Friday afternoon and evening, April 28th, to spotlight our show. The festivities will be held 5 pm to 8 pm in the Meeting Room with light refreshments, and the library will remain open so the public can view its spectacular art collection together with our Art In Flowers designs. Wouldn't this be a perfect opportunity to share this special event with a friend or two? Mark your calendars!

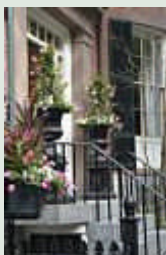
...more news on the following page...

May 17
Wednesday

Our next board meeting will be held at 10 am at the home of Linda Flynn.

► Please note that this is a change of date from that printed in our Program Book

May 18



The Hidden Gardens of Beacon Hill Annual Tour will be held from 9 am to 5 pm, rain or shine. Attendees will be invited behind the gates of ten spectacular private gardens to visit at their own pace. Complimentary tea and refreshments will be served at the Church of the Advent. Advance tickets are \$45.00, and \$55.00 on the day of the event.

For tickets and more information, please visit BeaconHillGardenClub.org.

May 20

***Attention all Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs! All annual Committee Reports must be submitted to Secretary Joline Yeaton by May 20th for inclusion in her Annual Report to be distributed at our Annual Banquet and Meeting in June.

May 23



Our Horticulture Meeting for this year will be held at the Gould Barn at 6:30 pm. Cheryl Connors' husband, Larry, will be telling us all about Backyard Beekeeping. He is a member of the Essex County Beekeepers Association, and will bring locally made honey for sale. In addition, Donna Ryan and Cheryl Connors will be preparing tasty morsels made with honey for us to enjoy. A special meeting not to be missed!

► Hostesses: Mary Connor, Linda Mann and Penny Rogers.

NOTES



► Save the date! Our club's Annual Banquet and Annual Meeting will be held at the Danversport Yacht Club, 161 Elliott Street, Danvers on June 13, 2017 at 6:30 pm. Please mark your calendars and look for details to follow very soon.

Membership Chair, Janet Hanson has announced that our Membership Renewals will be in our Postal Service mailboxes sometime during this week. Dues for Active Members are \$35.00, and those for Associate Members will be \$52.50. Please return your renewals with your dues payments as soon as possible. The deadline for payment is the club's Annual Banquet and Annual Meeting, June 13, 2017.

► A reminder from Treasurer, Mary Leahy! The club's fiscal year will close on June 30th and she is now looking for any receipts members may have, which are eligible for reimbursement by the club. She needs these very soon, so she can close her books at the end of our garden club year! So please get them to her as soon as possible.

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

The Annual Meeting of the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts will be held on Wednesday, June 7, 2017 at the Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center, 219 Littleton Road, Westford, MA. All members are welcome to attend. A registration form is available on the GCFM web site: <http://gcfm.org/Meetings/AnnualMeeting.aspx> The cost is \$55.00 and the deadline for registration is May 15th.



June 2016

*May is almost here, and with that it is almost time to plant the **Veteran's Memorial Garden at the Pine Grove Cemetery**, one of our club's annual civic projects. Many thanks to **Nancy Emmons**, who has volunteered to coordinate the planting, and **Sandy Whelan**, who has volunteered to coordinate the maintenance schedule for the summer. Nancy will be in touch very soon with a date for planting the garden. Please get your gardening tools ready, and watch for her "call to action." And, also be ready to lend a hand to Sandy when she requests volunteers to tend the garden during the summer! **Without the help of all of you, the continuation of this special civic project would not be possible.***

June is just around the corner, which means that Strawberry Festival time is almost here! ► This year's date is June 10, 2017. Please mark your calendar and keep the date free for the club! As you know, this is our club's most important fundraiser of the year. This time around, we are excited to announce that Donna Graves has graciously volunteered to coordinate our effort! She has some fun ideas, but would appreciate your ideas too. Please note that the Historical Society, which runs this event, has notified all local organizations such as ours that we should not plan to sell items that would compete with items sold by the professional crafters who participate. So, we are looking to all of you for ideas for nifty plant and garden related items we could sell. Pinterest is a good source. Unfortunately, no crafts this time around.

If something sparks your interest that is garden or flower related, and simple, jump right in and prepare a bunch to sell at our table. We are hoping to get at least two or three donations from each member so that our table is well stocked for the day. Stay tuned as we make our plans.

► Also, for those gardeners out there who would like to share some of your outdoor plants, please split them now so that they are at their best at our table!

► Oh, and save some time to help tend our table...June 10th...make a note!

► Just a reminder that each member is expected to contribute in some way to this club effort!



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

...Bits and pieces...



Norman Russell tells us all about Raised Beds at our March 2017 meeting.



Rose Ann Waite meets with our Art In Flowers event member-designers.

The Northern District Annual Meeting April 2017

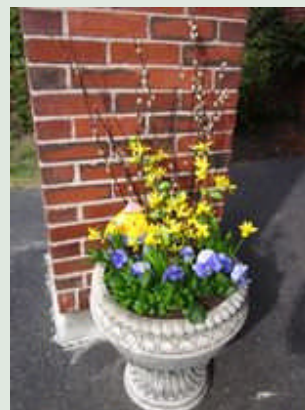


Rose Ann Waite accepts The Georgia McHugh Mentor Award



The group celebrates Rose Ann's Award!

Linda Flynn's Urns at the Steward School



...Green Thumb follows...

Green Thumb Corner

Today, let's start by chatting about a more serious subject than we do normally...mosquitoes. As many of you know, my daughter and her family live in the tropics on the island of St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands. She and her husband have three small children, and they adore living in paradise...it's pretty much always glorious there. However, along with the tropical beauty of the place, as many of you who have traveled to this part of the world know, there are mosquitoes.



My daughter and her family have at one time or another all had Dengue, Chikungunya, and Zika, all mosquito-borne illnesses. And so, I know almost firsthand what pesky mosquitoes are capable of doing to us humans. But mosquito-borne illnesses are not just relegated to those living in warm, far-away places. We here in the Northeast have our share as well. Each year we hear about mosquitoes testing positive for the West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis. And now, mosquitoes capable of carrying the Zika Virus have ranged as far north as Connecticut in the Eastern United States. Regarding the Zika Virus, last year there were cases reported in every state, mostly among travelers returning from infected areas in the tropics.

And so, we can see that not only are mosquitoes a nuisance as they buzz around us when we are outdoors, they are a legitimate cause for health concerns because of the diseases and viruses they bring with them. With mosquito season approaching once again, what are we to do to protect ourselves? In order to plan a strategy, we'll have to become scientific for a moment! Mosquitoes are thought to be attracted to us by substances in our sweat, and also the carbon dioxide we release through our skin and our breath. They can see us, smell us and detect the heat that our bodies emit. Female mosquitoes (yes, they're the bad ones) need a dose of blood (yes, ours) to reproduce. And, voilà, a match is made in heaven...at least for the female mosquito!

With all of this in mind, it seems logical that if we can be successful at blocking the scent sensors of mosquitoes, we might be able to keep them away from us. This is the secret behind products that contain DEET. These products interfere with nerve cells and detectors on mosquitoes' antennae and mouth parts, sending a signal to these "little beasts" to go elsewhere for supper! DEET was developed by the Army and has been around since the 1940's. If used carefully and according to directions, DEET is considered safe, although some negative effects from its use have been reported.

Still, there are those who consider commercial, chemical bug repellents like DEET full of nasty things they would never put on their skin. Perhaps some of you feel the same. There are natural, botanical alternatives for you folks, which we will talk about next, but it is wise to keep in mind that if you are planning a hike in the deep woods or expect to be anywhere else known to be infested with high populations of mosquitoes, you might have to "bite the bullet" and use the commercial repellent "big guns." While the botanical repellents we will mention do provide some protection from mosquitoes, there are many studies that have been done throughout the world that have consistently shown that botanical based repellents provide protection, but it is substantially less than DEET, and other chemical repellents. Botanicals also must be applied 3 to 4 times more often than even low-dose DEET to provide comparable protection. But, if you are going to take a few moments out on your deck to water your container plants, perhaps botanicals are enough!

It is interesting that some botanical scents we humans find delicious are considered positively revolting by mosquitoes! The following essential oils are considered to have mosquito repellent properties: Lemon eucalyptus oil, the essential oils Lemon, Thyme, Lavender, Geranium, Catnip, Citronella, Basil, Clove, Peppermint, Lemongrass and Cedar wood. It has been found that combining these essential oils works better as a repellent than using one oil alone. In addition, soybean oil, jojoba oil and coconut oil can be used with your choice of essential oils as "carrier" oils.

...more on the next page...

If you're looking to try essential oils, I've seen them at TJ Maxx on occasion and there are a couple of nice shops in Newburyport where you will find a good selection. And, of course, there is always Amazon.com. Two trusted suppliers on Amazon are **Plant Therapy** and **Edens Garden**. For best results, always use good quality oils! Once you have your selection of essential oils, you will be able to prepare your own mosquito spray repellent! Here's what to do:



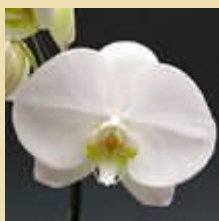
You will need to start with a clean 4 oz. spray bottle. Add 2 oz. distilled or boiled water, and 1 oz. witch hazel or vodka (yes, I said vodka!). To this add about 50 to 75 drops of your essential oils. Any combination of the oils I've mentioned will work. You can add less drops if you want a weaker mixture, but do not add more. **Adding more than the 75 drops of essential oils may make the repellent too strong and not safe to use. Since you are "combining" water and oils, which, as we know, don't mix, be sure not to fill the spray bottle completely. You will need room in the bottle to shake your repellent each time you use it. In addition to providing protection for you, your mosquito repellent could be sprayed on your dog's collar to offer some protection to your pet. Do not use this spray on cats, as many essential oils are toxic to cats!

And, a few things to know about essential oils...the only oils that can be applied directly to the skin are Frankincense, Lavender, Melaleuca, Melissa, Tea Tree and Sandalwood. All others should be diluted before use. Dilution is accomplished by mixing essential oil with a "carrier oil," which is a pure vegetable oil that helps "carry" the essential oil onto the skin. As I mentioned previously, good oils to use for this purpose are soybean oil, jojoba oil and coconut oil.

Don't want to go through the trouble of brewing your own botanical mosquito repellent? Two natural options you might want to try are Herbal Armor and Yellow Bird Insect Repellent. Both are available on Amazon.com.

One final hint on this subject for today...there are many plants that naturally repel mosquitoes that you can easily keep near your porch or door, either planted in the ground or containers! Here's a partial list: Lavender, Marigold, Basil, Catnip, Lemon Balm, Peppermint, Garlic, Rosemary, Lemongrass and Geranium. Headed out to the backyard to pick some tomatoes? Crush a handful of

leaves from your Basil, Peppermint, Lemongrass or Lavender and keep them in your pocket or rub them on your skin for quick protection from mosquitoes, who undoubtedly already have you in their sights for their next meal! Good luck with this adventure, and I hope victory will be yours in the "mosquito wars" this year will bring!



For the orchid growers among us, April should bring continued new growth to your plants. Your watering frequency will probably have to increase to support the new plant growth. This is a good time to consider repotting if your plants need it. Keep your eye on your plants...not only do your plants sport new growth at this time of year, they might also be sporting new bugs!

An addiction to gardening is not all bad when you consider all the other choices in life.

...Cora Lee Bell...