

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

October 23rd through December 12, 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.



Pumpkins are everywhere these days, and are members of the Cucurbita Family, which also includes vining plants such as cucumbers, watermelon, gourds, muskmelon and squash. Pumpkins are grown successfully on every continent on Earth except Antarctica.

Happy National Pumpkin Month!

October 23
Monday!



Our October regular membership meeting will be held at the Topsfield Library Meeting Room at 6:30 pm. Please note that this is a Monday evening meeting. Our Artistic Committee has planned an exciting meeting for all of us! Artistic Co-Chair, Rose Ann Waite will expertly demonstrate three floral arrangements in a special ceramic pumpkin container. There will be a fresh flower arrangement with flowers available at our local supermarkets, a silk floral arrangement, and a secret simple arrangement anyone can do, even your Posy Picker Editor! We will each be receiving our very own ceramic pumpkin container to bring home to create our own floral masterpieces!

****Thank you to our gracious hostess for this meeting: Judy Donovan**

November 16

PLATINUM POSIES



There has been some difficulty getting details about the **Joint Meeting** of the five area garden clubs this year, but the latest word is that the **Middleton Garden Club** has invited **Platinum Posies Florist of Middleton** to present our program at the **First Church Congregational, 4 Georgetown Road, Boxford** at 7 pm. Stay tuned for final details when they become available.

November 26



Our club will decorate the Topsfield Library for the holidays at 1 pm. Once again this year, Artistic Co-Chairs Rose Ann Waite and Donna Graves are planning simple, beautiful and joyous decorations very tastefully placed throughout the interior of the building, with wreaths and swags on the outside of the building. Helping hands will be needed, so mark your calendars and be prepared to be part of Rose Ann and Donna's merry crew!

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

December 5

Our next board meeting will be held at the home of Joline Yeaton, at 10 am.

December 12



Another enjoyable Holiday Social Lunch and Yankee Swap is being planned for us at the Bradford Tavern, 87 Haverhill Street, Rowley at 12:00 pm. Stay tuned for further details about this year's festive occasion and be sure to mark your calendars!

► Since the holiday season should be a time of cheer for everyone, our board is requesting that each member bring a non-perishable food item to be donated to the **Topsfield Food Pantry**. For canned foods, low-salt is preferred. Also needed are items such as laundry detergent, toothpaste and other household items.

December 14



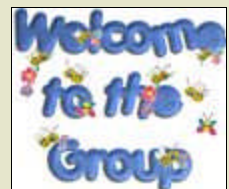
Our Garden Therapy Committee will hold a Boxwood Tree Workshop for members of the Topsfield Council On Aging at the Trinity Church Meeting Hall, Topsfield. Rita Galvin and her committee might be looking for help putting materials for the workshop together ahead of time, so mark your calendars and please stay tuned for further details.

NOTES

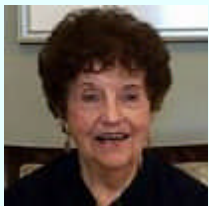


Many thanks from Nancy Emmons to her "Magnificent Crew of Four," who helped with the fall clean up at the Prospect Street and Linebrook Road Islands and the Veteran's Memorial Garden at the Pine Grove Cemetery. Nancy, Shirley Holt, Jane Cullinan, Sandy Whelan and Linde Martin tucked in all our public spaces for the winter with tender loving!

Good news...our club is welcoming new members. If you have a friend who might be interested in participating as an active member of our group, why not extend an invitation to a few of our meetings to see if the fit is a good one!



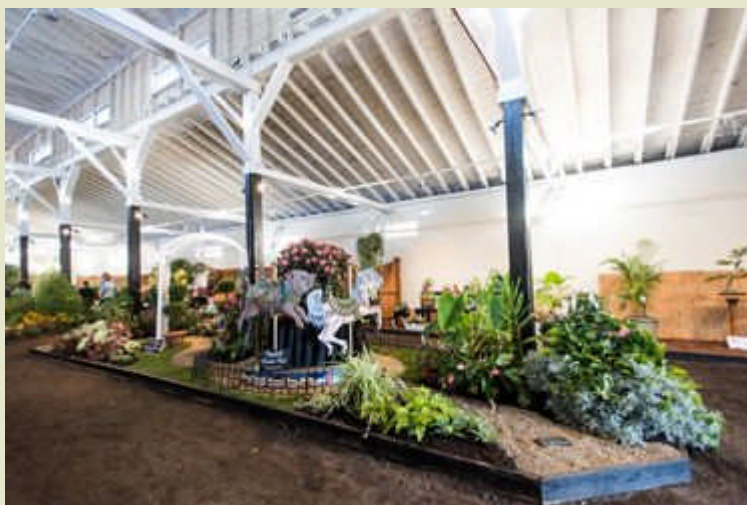
...more news on the following page...



It's hard to get used to Helen Gaffey's absence in our lives, don't you think? She is missed. One of the sweet memories we have of her is her love of cooking. As many of you know, in fond memory of members we have lost, our club donates books to the Topsfield Town Library. Considering Helen's love affair with the kitchen, the book our board chose for her is entitled "The Food Lover's Garden:

Growing, Cooking, and Eating Well" by Jenni Blackmore. The book is already in circulation at the library and is beautifully illustrated. Helen certainly would have loved paging through it. Take a peek at it the next time you're there, if someone else hasn't already taken it out!

Topsfield Fair News



Exciting news for the Topsfield Garden Club! Instead of the usual spectacular float the club has created for the last several years for the Topsfield Fair Parade, there was a change of pace this year. They instead created an exquisite medium-sized garden display in the Flower Barn. It was the best garden display in their category, which earned them the "Donald Miller Award." Hopefully, some of you saw the beauty of this garden for yourselves! Congratulations, Topsfield Garden Club, for a job very well done! For more views of Flower Barn happenings at the fair this year, go to <http://topsfield.wickedlocal.com/photogallery/WL/20171011/ENTERTAINMENTLIFE/101109996/PH/1?start=2>

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...Bits and pieces...



*Remembering Helen Gaffey at the
Linebrook Road Island*

Memories of Summer



Steward School Urn



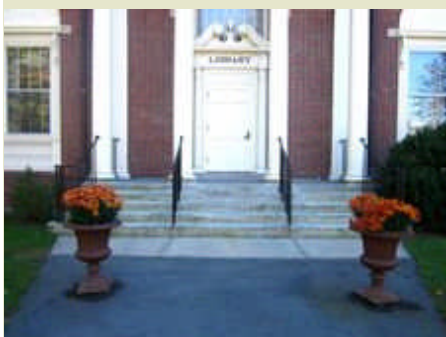
*Anne Mahen garden at the Parson Capen
House*



*Fun at Nunan's
September 26, 2017*



Janet Hanson welcomes new member, Marsha Stevens!



Claudette Poor's Fall Library Urns



Prospect Street Island Fall Cleanup

...continued on the next page...

Green Thumb Corner

I'm crazy about pumpkins, are you? Anything in the supermarket containing pumpkin inevitably finds its way into my shopping cart. Fall is not my favorite season because of what follows, but my spirits always soar anyway because it's pumpkin season!



Even writing this in what I consider "pumpkin color font" is making me feel warm and fuzzy! With all of this in mind, I decided to do some research on pumpkins and share with you what I have learned. So, here it goes...

As I mentioned in the header on the first page of this edition of our newsletter, Pumpkins belong to the Cucurbita family. They are considered a fruit, and grow on vines with both male and female flowers. You can see in the picture above that there are many varieties, and depending on the variety, they take from 85 to 125 days to grow. Giant Pumpkins, like the one at the Topsfield Fair this year, take 160 days. Ever wonder whether you can eat those giant pumpkins? The answer is technically yes, but they are very bland and, because they grow so fast, they may contain nutrients and fertilizers that you may not want to ingest. So, best to stick with standard size pumpkins when thinking about the great recipes you can use them in.

Looking back in history, pumpkins are believed to have originated in North America. Pumpkin seeds have been found in Mexico dating back to 7000 to 5500 BC. It's amazing that there are ways to figure this out! The first pumpkins are believed to be more of the crooked neck variety, and not the creased orange ones we are so familiar with. Native Americans used pumpkin as a staple in their diets centuries before the pilgrims ever set foot in this country. Archeologists have determined that pumpkins were cultivated along river banks together with sunflowers and beans.



When corn made its appearance, pumpkins (squash), corn and beans were grown together by the early Native Americans. Interestingly, the corn served as a natural trellis for the beans to grow on. The beans, in turn, added nitrogen to the soil, which nourished the corn, and the bean vines helped to stabilize the corn stalks on windy days. The pumpkin (squash) plants sheltered the corn's shallow roots and shaded the ground, preserving moisture. This symbiotic relationship between the plants was known as the "Three Sisters." Today, we call it "companion planting."

These early Native Americans made use of every part of the pumpkins they grew. They roasted, baked, parched, boiled and dried the sweet flesh. They ate the seeds, and also used the seeds as medicine. The blossoms, which are edible, were added to stews. The flesh that was dried could be ground into flour. Pounded and dried flesh formed into strips was used for weaving into mats, which they used for the purpose of trading.

...more on the next page...

The shells didn't go to waste either! These were dried and used as bowls and storage containers. You can see from all of this that the pumpkin was an extremely important staple to the early Native Americans. After the arrival of European explorers in the "New World," pumpkins became a worldwide staple as well. Among those who arrived on American shores in those early days were the Pilgrims. The Native Americans introduced the Pilgrims to pumpkins and squashes, and they became an important food source for them as well, especially in winter because they stored well.



And, here's something to ponder...when we think of the early Pilgrim Thanksgiving celebrations, we picture a table adorned with delicious pumpkin pies, don't we? Not so. Here's what really happened. One must remember that 393 years ago the early settlers hadn't yet come up with a baking oven, nor did they

have flour or butter with which to make a pie crust. Lacking these conveniences, they cut the top off a pumpkin, scooped out the seeds and filled the cavity with cream, eggs, honey and spices to make a custard. They placed the top back on and carefully buried the filled pumpkin in hot ashes. When it was finished cooking, they lifted the cooked pumpkin from the ashes and scooped the yummy contents out along with the cooked flesh. It was pie in a pumpkin! I am so impressed with the ingenuity of the folks who lived so long ago without the modern conveniences we have today. Pumpkin pie as we know it today didn't appear in an American cookbook until the early 19th century! And, let's not forget the pumpkin beer the Pilgrims brewed! The fermented combination of persimmons, hops, pumpkin and maple sugar went down real easy, I'm sure!

The most important information to take away from this discussion about the relationship between the early settlers and their introduction to pumpkins and squashes by the Native Americans they encountered is that, without these food staples, they might have died of starvation. To testify how important the Pilgrims considered pumpkins, here is an old verse composed around 1633:

*"For pottage and puddings and custards and pies
Our pumpkins and parsnips are common supplies,
We have pumpkins at morning and pumpkins at noon,
If it were not for pumpkins we should be undone."*

And now, a few tips to make this year's pumpkins last longer for you:

- 1) Choose a firm pumpkin without soft spots or visible damage. In a cool spot, out of direct sun and protected from frost, such a pumpkin can last for 3 months!*
- 2) If you've carved your pumpkin, coat the cut edges with petroleum jelly or vegetable oil. The idea is to seal the flesh so it will not lose moisture. Keep it out of the direct sun and refrigerate it overnight. Some folks have had success spraying with hairspray or clear acrylic spray.*

Happy Halloween!