

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

May 21st through June 30, 2019

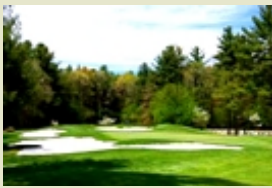


Did you know that the common Lilac, aka *Syringa vulgaris*, is the herb of the month of May? Read more about this intoxicatingly scented bush in this month's Green Thumb Corner!

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

Welcome to our new members Anne-Marie Eugley and Marie Murphy!

June 4



Our club's Annual Meeting will be held at the Ipswich Country Club at 6:30 pm. Our Hospitality Committee Co-Chairs, Gerrie Bunker and Linda Flynn, have planned a very special evening for us at this beautiful venue. Sumptuous dinner options include Marinated, sautéed Chicken Riesling and Pan Fried Sole with Crab Stuffing, served with a salad and Strawberry Shortcake. Time is running out to make your reservation, so please contact Gerrie Bunker as soon as possible with your \$47.00 payment and choice of entrée.

June 4

► Remember to renew your club membership with Janet Hanson by June 4th!

June 8



Topsfield's Annual Strawberry Festival will be held on the Town Common!

Here are some Strawberry Festival reminders from Co-Presidents Jane and Sandy for all members:

- The success of this event depends upon all of us to participate as listed in our yearbook. It is an important fundraiser effort that makes a difference in raising awareness of our club throughout the community as well as bringing us the financial return that keeps our club fiscally healthy.

- We are asking that all of us create at least 2 containers of potted plants and if you are on a roll, make what you can to contribute. The smaller and medium sized planters are easiest for folks to get to their cars. We will include a section for herbs, as well as plants that are native from your gardens. Separate from our plants, we will continue with the promotion of Green Elephant items. Gently used gardening related items work well. Pat Durgin and Co-President Sandy will be contacting all members ahead of time to determine what each will bring to insure that our booth will provide a variety of great things to sell throughout the day!

- Ideal drop off options: Please drop off your creations by 9:00 am on Saturday, June 8th to the club booth, which will be set up on the Town Common, or drop off to Sandy or Jane, or we can pick up prior to Saturday June 8th. This will help us with arranging the table in advance of the event start at 10 am. For those who will be tending the booth later in the day, we can take your planters at that time as well to display, but we want to have a great start at opening.

- An email will circulate with a sign-up sheet asking for your participation during the event for set up, booth duty or booth break down.

Together let's make this a great success!



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

NOTES



► A reminder from Treasurer, Marsha Stevens! 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. Marsha 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.

Just a reminder that, as a service to the Topsfield community, our club maintains two traffic islands in town, one at the intersection of River Road and Prospect Street, and the other on Route 97 and Linebrook Road. In addition, our club plants and maintains a garden at the flagpole in the Pine Grove Cemetery. A small group of mighty garden club members recently cleaned both islands and planted the cemetery garden to begin the season, and now it's up to the rest of us to sign up for a week of maintenance during the spring, summer and fall seasons...some deadheading, weeding and any watering you can manage. You will have an opportunity to sign up at our Annual Meeting. Why not sign up with a buddy if that works better for you, and please jump in and do your part!

...Bits and pieces...



We display our creations at our April Artistic Meeting with Tina Lefebvre of Platinum Posies Florist.



Celebrating Arbor Day with the kids and a Dura Heat River Birch Tree planting at the Steward School!

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

Our May 2019 Conservation Meeting at the Peabody Institute Museum, Salem



Enjoying the special exhibit Nature's Nation: American Art and the Environment.



Lunch and laughter at the Hawthorne Hotel following our PEM visit!

Spring work at our Community Gardens



Break time and the finished product at the Prospect Street Island.



Preparing the Pine Grove Cemetery garden for Memorial Day.

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

Art In Bloom at the Museum of Fine Arts



Claudette, our designer, arrives at the MFA bright and early on entry day!



Claudette's stunning interpretation of The Torso of A Fertility Goddess at the MFA.



The rear view of Claudette's design.



Claudette creates her design!



Certificates of Appreciation from the Museum of Fine Arts for designer, Claudette Poor, and her assistant, Jane Cullinan's participation in Art In Bloom. Our club couldn't be more proud!

In other MFA news...



Meet Riley, a pest detection volunteer guard at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston! Perhaps some of you, who visited the museum to see Claudette and Jane's design at Art In Bloom a few weeks ago, met Riley, as he performs the important duty of seeking out pests like moths and other insects that might come and go with art objects, and present a threat in the museum environment. Weimaraners have a super sense of smell and are very intelligent, making Riley quite qualified for his job!

...Green Thumb Corner follows...

Green Thumb Corner

A few days ago, I was sitting here wondering what the Green Thumb Corner would morph into this month. And, just at the right time, Co-President Jane sent me a very neat article about lilacs. After reading it, I knew instantaneously that I had my topic for today! Who doesn't swoon at the delicious scent of the blossoms of




this bush? Even though most lilacs only flower for about two or three weeks in spring, their pretty faces inspired the likes of Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh, who choose to depicted them in their paintings. So, why don't we get to know a little about what makes this plant tick? Ready? Here we go...

Like many of the plant varieties that grow in our country today, lilacs are not a native species. They derive from both Europe and Asia and are actually part of the olive family. The common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) originated in eastern Europe and was introduced in the United States in the 18th century. It is believed that the oldest living lilacs in North America were planted in 1750 at the Governor Wentworth Estate in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson also grew them in their gardens. And here's an interesting fact... because lilacs don't propagate well in the wild, groups of lilacs found along country roads in the middle of nowhere are probably leftover from some earlier abandoned farm or homestead!

Because lilacs need a cold climate to be happy and a cold-initiated period of dormancy to trigger blooming, they are perfectly suited to our climate. Matter-of-fact, they are considered the northern gardener's answer to the southern azalea. Lilacs grow perfectly in USDA growing zones 3 through 7. That means they are hardy to -40 degrees! That's well within our local growing zone 6. Their little place in the world should provide at least six hours of full sun and good drainage. In addition, you can add a little love with a feeding of rose fertilizer each spring. Do watch out for powdery mildew and aphids on your bush, and treat promptly. I saw one suggestion to plant lilacs near windows, doors and patios so that it is easier to enjoy their scent! One must be patient though, since it may take several years for your newly planted lilac to bloom. Pruning might be in your lilac's future once they reach 6 to 8 feet tall so that you can enjoy the blossoms at a reasonable height! At this point, it is good to prune a third of the oldest branches, but do it right after flowering so that you don't wind up cutting off next year's blooms, which form shortly after the current year's blossoms have faded! Another interesting point is that a lilac's scent can change depending on a particular year's climate. A cool spring and summer will result in a different scent than a hot season.

I mentioned earlier that some consider lilacs the herb of the month of May. In herbal lore, vases of lilacs are placed in every room of a house that is considered

...more on the following page...



haunted to clear this unwanted spirit energy! Here in New England, lilacs were planted, and sometimes still are today, to protect properties from negative energies.

Aside from the mystical, it is interesting to note that lilac flowers are edible and have some medicinal qualities. The taste of the blossoms is said to be somewhat bitter, and so the blooms are probably best used as garnishes. Medicinally, lilac oil can be used to treat rashes, minor cuts and scrapes, sunburn and other skin issues. If you are interested in aromatherapy, the oil can be used to ward off symptoms of anxiety and depression.

But, while lilac fragrance is deliciously intoxicating, it is difficult to capture the scent in an oil. That said, I did see a few YouTube videos which show how to do it. There are also some places on the internet to buy lilac oil, but be careful not to purchase oil made with artificial scent and other artificial ingredients.

If you manage to get your hands on some lilac oil, here's how to make some room spray: fill a spray bottle with half water and half vodka...yes, I said VODKA! Add 12 drops of lilac oil. Give it a shake, spray and if the scent isn't strong enough, simply add a few more drops of lilac oil.

Have a bumper-crop of blossoms? Here's how to make some lilac honey: fill a jar with freshly picked blossoms, leaving a bit of room at the top. Fill the jar with honey, and cap it. Allow this to infuse for at least 6 weeks. There is no need to strain before use. Just eat the flowers along with the honey. Lovely when added to recipes or tea, or spread on some luscious bread!

How about some Lilac Syrup for your pancakes, lemonade or even an exotic alcoholic drink or two? It's a cinch: combine 1 cup of water and 1 cup of sugar in a saucepan over medium heat until sugar is dissolved. Add 1 cup of lilac flowers and simmer for another 10 minutes. Blueberries can be added for deeper color. Remove from heat, strain and store in a bottle in your refrigerator at the ready! This can also be frozen for use later on.

And now for some final fun lilac facts:

- In the Language of Flowers, lilacs depict the first emotions of love.
- Hummingbirds and butterflies adore lilac blooms just as much as we do.
- Lilac is the 8th wedding anniversary flower.
- In Victorian times, giving a lilac was meant to be a reminder of an old love.
- Lilacs are the official flower of New Hampshire.
- There are over 1000 varieties of lilacs.
- Purple lilac varieties have the strongest scent.
- Lilac wood is very dense and used for making musical instruments and knife handles.
- Lilac bushes can live more than 100 years. ♦

Well, yet another garden club year is just about complete and with that I send my best wishes to all for a spectacular and safe summer season!

Happy gardening and see you in the fall. ♥