

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 27 Edition 2 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

FEBRUARY 2011

JANUARY MEETING

Ed Ponek, chairman of the nominating committee, nominated CJ Dykes to fill Mark Boone's unexpired term as at-large board member. There were no additional nominations from the floor. The election for that position will be held at the February meeting.

The first of a series of "field trips" for club members was announced by President Charles Gilliam. Members who would like to tour the Soil Test Laboratory are asked to meet in the lobby at the facility located at 4300 Reedy Creek Road just prior to 2:00 pm on February 17. You may contact

Charles for additional information.

Charles is also looking for volunteers to help with some proposed vegetable gardening sites. There are several groups that are planting gardens to provide vegetables for clients of health-care facilities, schools and housing projects. Come learn more about these projects at the February meeting.

Mac Williamson has found a source for shirts and other apparel with a Gardeners of Wake County logo. Orders were being taken at the January meeting. Orders can also be placed in February but you may want to call our "immediate past president" for additional information.

CLUB MEETINGS

*Meetings are at 7:30 pm at the
JC Raulston Arboretum*

Feb. 15 Becky Heath "Brent and
Becky's Bulbs"

March 15 Debbie Roos "Pollinator
Gardens"

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FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Becky Heath of Brent and Becky's Bulbs of Gloucester, Virginia is the speaker for the February meeting. Their company is primarily a mail-order business known for their varieties of daffodils and lots of other exciting bulbs. They have been generous in their donations to the JC Raulston Arboretum so you may want to take a winter walk through the gardens to see which of their gifts may be peeking out of the ground.

There was an interesting article on some of their bulbs in the April 2010 issue of *Fine Gardening*. You also may want to check out brentandbeckysbulbs.com for additional information.

AZALEA SALE

Bob Hartgrove reports that we will offer 4,000 azalea plants for sale at the Fair Grounds April 14-17. Your help is needed unloading plants and setting up the sales areas on April 11-13 (Monday-Wednesday), providing "customer service" Thursday-Sunday and buying plants to round out your own azalea collection. Please contact Bob at the telephone number or e-mail address in the Membership directory to volunteer.



The profits from this sale allow us to increase the endowment account that provides scholarships for horticulture students at NCSU. With increases in tuition and reduction of some other sources of financial aid, adequate funding of our club scholarships is even more critical this year.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
CHARLES GILLIAM

Vice President
MARK BOONE

Treasurer
BRUCE BYFORD

Secretary
PAULA HOFFMANN

At Large Board Members

BOB JACKSON
ILENE VAKKUR
GINNY PARKER
VACANT

Immediate Past President

MAC WILLIAMSON

- Activities Juliette LaBonte
- Audit Gary Jewel
- Azalea Sale Bob Hartgrove
- Beautification Awards Ginny Parker
- Club Awards Spencer Clark
- Endowment Investment Chairman Marcy Hege
- Flower Show Charles Gilliam
- Friendship Paula Hoffmann
- Historical Dick Lankford
- Membership Carole Johnson
- Newsletter Anne Clapp
- Nominating Ed Ponek
- Programs (ex officio) Mark Boone
- Projects vacant
- Publicity Vandy Bradow
- Scholarship Leon Lucas
- Telephone Jim Wilson
- Webmaster Jim Wilson

www.gardenersofwakecounty.org

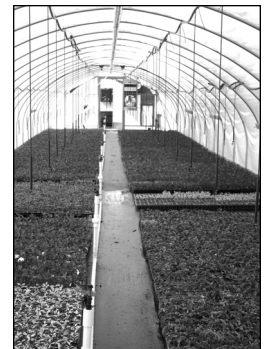
BRYCE LANE

Thanks to Bryce Lane for a most informative program on the birth of greenhouses – a history of manipulation. He started out with a new definition of “gardening” – Botany by control freaks.

The Emperor Tiberius (who lived AD 14-37) was advised to eat an Armenian cucumber each day to remain healthy. In order to grow cucumbers in Rome during the winter his gardeners dug a pit in the ground and covered it with a sheet of mica. That early greenhouse was called a “Specularium” built “just so Caesar could have his salad.”

In later years, explorers brought exotic plants to Europe from more tropical climates. They needed cold weather protection to survive. In 1545 The Orangery was built at the University of Padua in Italy. It was an enclosed building, without windows (because sheet glass for windows had not been invented yet). Citrus trees were moved into the unheated building for the winter to keep them from freezing and then moved back into courtyard for the growing season.

Another famous “orangery” was constructed at the Palace of Versailles in 1684. The building was 500 feet long, 42 feet wide and 45 feet tall. There was no heat or light in the building. The temperatures did not get below 45 degrees in the structure.



By 1800 the process for casting glass sheets for windowpanes had improved and the era of “Crystal Palaces” was underway. The early ones were stone and glass buildings. By 1816 they could be heated with piped hot water and by 1830 larger glass expanses were possible using plate glass. In 1844 the Palm House at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew opened to the public. The 19 acre Crystal Palace opened as part of the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. It burned in 1936.

New Members

Pamela Taheri, Cary

Johnny & Sherrill Johnson, Garner

Will & Donna Farmer, Wake Forest

Kent Cline Earnhardt, Raleigh

Membership Application

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____ E-mail _____

Occupation _____

Gardening Special Interests _____

Other Interests/Hobbies _____

Sponsor (not required) _____

Membership dues are \$15 for individuals and \$25 for families for the calendar year: January – December. Make checks payable to Gardeners of Wake County. Application form and check are to be mailed to: Gardeners of Wake County, Carole Johnson, Membership Chairman
5346 Lake Wendell Rd., Zebulon, NC 27597

Membership form must be received by February for the 2011 Directory.

The greenhouses of the 21st century may sometimes look like the crystal palaces of earlier eras but they are much more functional. They may be decorative art works like the Lewis Ginter Conservatory in Richmond or the lobby of the Opreyland Hotel in Nashville or they may be completely functional plastic hoop houses.

The new greenhouses on the NCSU campus are completely automated. Light, temperature and water are controlled automatically. Poinsettias, Easter lilies and strawberries can be grown in any season with the correct computer program. They are necessary for agricultural research and they are profitable for farmers who want to supply flowers and produce for customers who want those products when they are not available in outdoor gardens.

BONSAI

Carl Barnett displayed two of his Bonsai creations at the January meeting. One was an azalea plant that was started from a damaged plant at last year's plant sale. Several members asked about growing one of their own. If you have access to a copy of the December-January issue of Horticulture magazine there is an excellent article "No Small Art" by Megan Shinn with photographs by Al Parish.



CANNED POTATOES

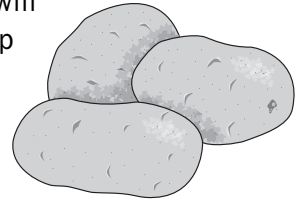
Did you know that you can grow potatoes in containers? The foliage on some sweet potatoes is quite decorative as an ornamental plant. Most potatoes, though, are grown for taste, not appearance.

One method is to enclose soil in a heavy-duty black plastic bag for a final soil depth of about 20 inches. The bag can be left in the garden or in a sunny protected area on the patio. Plant the potato slip about 6 inches deep. As the plant grows you will need to add additional soil because the new potatoes will form between the bottom of the slip and the top of the soil.

If the potatoes grow up above the soil line they will turn green, become bitter, and in some cases not safe to eat. Do not fertilize plants after potatoes begin forming as that often produces green, leafy plants with a few small potatoes.

Flower pots, even the black plastic nursery pots are usually not deep enough for container-grown potatoes. There are some 24-inch tall garbage cans that can be adapted. Drill a few holes in the bottom of the can for drainage. The pots are sturdier and easier to move after potatoes are started.

Potatoes are formed after the plants bloom. If you want to harvest a few "new" potatoes, scratch under the soil around the base of the plant with your hand and gently pull off a few potatoes of the size you would like to eat. Leave the others for another harvest. When the plant dies back completely it is time to harvest the entire crop.



FEBRUARY IN THE GARDEN

With the cold weather and lack of rain some fescue lawns may be suffering. This is about the last date to safely apply fertilizer to green them up a bit before

February in the Garden – Continued on page 4

**GARDENERS OF
WAKE COUNTY**

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Zebulon, NC 27597

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February in the Garden – *continued from page 3*

hot weather comes. Be sure that lawns are watered if you feel you have to apply fertilizer.

Wild garlic, chickweed and dandelions are growing beautifully in flower beds and lawns. Pull up the weeds of flower beds because herbicides will kill emerging annuals and perennials as easily as they kill weeds. Spray lawns with broadleaf herbicides when temperatures are warm and rain (or snow) is not expected within 24 hours.

If you have to prune a Bradford pear, dogwood or other flowering fruit tree to control size or repair storm damage it is safe to do it in February. If you just want to enjoy the flowers in the house for an early look of spring you can cut a few branches as well. After you have cut the stems from the tree, re-cut the branch at an angle and place it in warm water. Bring it in the house and leave it in a cool area, out of direct sun for a



week or so. When the blooms begin to open re-cut the branches, put them in fresh water and put them on display.

This is also a good time to replace mulch around trees and shrubs. Choose a day when temperatures are comfortable for you to work outside. Mice, squirrels and moles often are gnawing bark in February so check for any signs of damage and be sure to keep mulch away from the base of trees to reduce problems from gnawing animals.

This is also the time to prune roses, summer flowering vines and Hydrangea paniculata. Many plants appear to have cold damage but you may want to wait until March to see how severe that damage may be before you prune. It is easier to tell the extent to freeze damage after buds and new growth begin to swell.

February is also the time to apply fertilizer to fruit and nut trees. Lime-sulfur and oil sprays can also be applied to those plants now for disease and insect control. Asparagus crowns and strawberry plants can also be put in the ground this month.