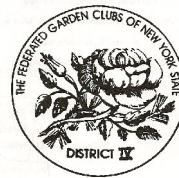


THE GARDEN GATE

FGCNYS District IV Newsletter: Winter 2010

www.nydistrictIV.org



Director's Message

As I write this report, it is very evident that winter has settled in! The North Country is blanketed with crystalline snow. It is extraordinarily beautiful as the sun shines and glistens on the iceladen trees and bushes. The bare branches give us an opportunity to observe the artistic curves, stretches, and shapes of our trees. This is surely one of the blessings of winter. It is also a very quiet and peaceful time of year. It is time to relax and reflect and to set goals for the future. For many of us this means reading seed catalogues and gardening magazines as we envision and plan our own gardens, as well as those we design, plant, and maintain as garden club projects. Usually, these community gardens involve landscaping and floral designs. Recently however, vegetable gar-

dens have been needed in our communities in order to support and to enrich local food banks. The skills and expertise of our members have been called upon to assist in the design and planting of these. I am so proud of the many club projects, new and ongoing, which focus on the nutritional support of their neighbors.

Recently I have had the honor to install the new officers of the Carillon Garden Club and the Ballston Spa House and Garden Club. I wish these new club officers the very best and I pledge my support to them and their clubs. I am excited about the new programs being proposed. There is a sense of excitement and enthusiasm that comes with each new administration and each new program year.

I am especially proud to inform you that due to the tremendous enthusiasm generated by last year's day trip, Martha Van Patten and her committee have planned another. Please see the article on page 2 of this issue for more information. I encourage you to consider joining us on this trip.

Plans are also being made for the Spring District Meeting and Luncheon. Schuylerville Garden Club will host this event on May 4 at the Fort William Henry Resort and Conference Center in Lake George. The Schuylerville Club is planning an informative, productive, and thoroughly enjoyable day. Please plan on attending.

I have recently been informed that due to health concerns, Angela Doglio has resigned her position as First Vice President of the FGCNYS. My prayers and best wishes are with her. Due to this change in the Executive Board, Pam Foehser will become First Vice President. Pam is a member of the Schuylerville Garden Club and a member of District IV. I wish her the best in her new position and I pledge our support.

Enjoy the beauty of the winter season. I wish you good health, happiness, and an abundant life.

Pat Wania, FGCNYS District IV Director

The Garden Gate

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District IV Officers

Patricia Wania, Director
Pat Leonard, First Assistant Director
Meri Rees, Second Assistant Director
Mary Leonard, Recording Secretary
Heather Cushing, Corresponding Secretary
Sue VanOmmeren, Treasurer

District Plans Field Trip

Last year's trip to Garden in the Woods was such a success that District IV is making plans for another trip to Massachusetts on June 21. Members of all clubs are invited to attend a day-long bus trip that will include a tour of the gardens at The Mount (Edith Wharton's home) in Lenox as well as a tour of the Berkshire Botanical Garden in Stockbridge. A box lunch will be served on the terrace at The Mount, and time has been planned for shopping in Stockbridge or tea and refreshments at the Red Lion's Inn, if you choose. The terrain at both locations is not steep or hilly though there are some slight slopes and a few sets of steps.

While details are still being finalized, the cost of the trip is expected to be around \$70 per person, which includes the bus, the two tours, and lunch. The planning committee is hoping to offer two pick-up and drop-off locations: the Aviation Mall and the Wilton Mall. The registration deadline will be June 1, and forms will be available as soon as details are confirmed.

For more information, contact Martha VanPatten (583-0688 or gmvan6@aol.com).

Sue VanOmmeren, Editor

Youth Contests

There is another Poetry and Prose contest due by April 10, 2010. The theme is "The Earth Beneath My Feet." All clubs are encouraged to present this to their local schools. It is a nice way of connecting with the youth of the community and it requires very little work.

The Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl poster contest is due to the state chair by January 20, 2010. The Ballston Spa House and Garden will have more entries this year. The students and teachers were excited to do this again after having winners last year.

As more information on upcoming Youth Contests becomes available, this chair person will forward them to you. It would be wonderful if every club had some youth sponsored activity!

Barb Millington, Youth Chair

Passing the Mite Box

For many years members of the Glenville Hills Garden Club have contributed to the World Gardening fund not by digging into the club's treasury, but by digging into their own pockets. At each meeting since the early 70s, the club's treasurer "passes the mite box," and members fill it with their loose change or small bills. (One former treasurer had to remind members not to contribute buttons or foreign coins, as all sorts of odds and ends from change purses were ending up in the box!)

The club's mite box is actually a tin. It is shaped and decorated like a small flower pot and has a handle and a lid with a coin slot. New members are always a bit puzzled when the mite box is passed and everyone starts dropping money into this tin. Explaining it provides a good opportunity to remind members about the current World Gardening project.

At a recent meeting someone asked why the tin is called a mite box. A longtime member and past club president remembered that it had some religious basis. With that knowledge, a quick Google search tells us this:

The biblical story of the widow's mite appears in the New Testament (Mark 12:41-44), it tells of a poor widow who gave two mites to the treasury of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus used this offering, all that the poor widow owned, as an example of faith and sacrifice. The mite is the smallest of all Roman coins (about the size of a dime); it circulated in Judea beginning in 103 BC, continuing into the early first century AD.

By passing the mite box, the Glenville Hills Garden Club typically contributes one hundred dollars or more to World Gardening each year without any additional fundraising. Club members see themselves as women helping women, and the group effort becomes personal.

Sue VanOmmeren, Editor

Ballston Spa House and Garden Club

In August club members visited Shades of Green gardens at the home of Wynne Trowbridge in Charlton. Wynne gave members a personal tour of her gardens, highlighting many varieties of shade plants and discussing the consequences of the excessive summer rains. Members purchased a variety of plants including fern, hosta, astilbe, heuchera, brunnera, and pulmonaria. Other District IV clubs may wish to consider a visit to Shades of Green gardens which is free, fun, and informative. The website is: www.lotsahosta.com/.

In September members held an evening meeting at Brookside Museum and enjoyed a demonstration of pressed ferns, flowers, vegetables, and fruit by Jo-Ann Gannett of Garden Treasures. Also in September, a joint meeting of the Ballston Spa House and Garden Club and the Glenville Hills Garden Club was held at the Maple Avenue Schoolhouse in Charlton. The featured speaker was Judy Stacey who is the Albany City Gardener and the maestro behind the Albany Tulip Festival.

Club members visited Maplewood Manor Nursing Home in Ballston Spa in October where they

assisted the residents in making decorative floral arrangements from small pumpkins and fresh flowers. In previous years, members had created floral arrangements for the residents and delivered them. This year, all agreed that engaging the residents in actually creating the arrangements themselves would better reflect the true principals of horticultural therapy. The result was a very pleasant afternoon enjoyed by members and residents alike.

The second annual Elves Auction was held in November at the home of member Maureen Mariani. Maureen served a lovely luncheon which was followed by an auction of delicately used items donated by and bid on by club members. The proceeds from the auction enhanced the club's treasury while providing an afternoon of fun for everyone.

Club members were saddened to learn of the passing of member Lynn Monroe on November 24. Lynn was the head inkeeper of the Apple Tree Bed and Breakfast in Ballston Spa and was a clinical herbalist educator and cancer guide. Lynn gained her expertise in herbal medicine through many apprenticeships and completed advanced programs in herbal medicine with highly rated and respected herbalists from around the world. Lynn provided an integrative approach to healing which brought great relief to many people facing the challenges of a cancer diagnosis.

The Village of Ballston Spa celebrated the holiday season with a parade and Festival of Trees. Club members carried the club banner in the parade, followed by member Barbara Devlin's children waving from her truck which was decorated with a Christmas tree and other holiday adornments. In addition to donating and decorating an artificial Christmas tree entitled "Home for the Holidays," members also worked as volunteers at the Festival of Trees. Proceeds are used for a variety of village-sponsored activities as well as village beautification.

On December 10, the club enjoyed a delicious holiday luncheon at the home of Barbara Devlin. This year, members agreed that the spirit of giving would best be met by skipping the usual holiday grab bag gift and replacing it with donations of food items for the local food pantry.

Pam Relyea

Carillon Garden Club

The members of the Carillon Garden Club of Ticonderoga and Hague just completed another successful and popular annual Christmas wreath fund-raising project. For several months members prepared by taking orders, wiring cones, and making bows. In September and October orders for approximately 300 wreaths of varying

sizes were confirmed, some to be decorated, some kept plain, and some with just bows. Nearly all members participated in this creative endeavor by decorating with cones, berries, and other seasonal adornments and then delivering just before Thanksgiving. Red and burgundy bows were made by the members with several members learning a new craft. Two days of wreath decorating allowed for fellowship, fun, and teamwork, and of course boosting the club's treasury. Wonderful soups, chowders, and chili as well as luscious desserts kept everyone nourished for this favorite project.

Betty Rettig, President

Glenville Hills Garden Club of Saratoga County

After spending a long wet summer watching the tomatoes rot on their vines, this club was ready for some socialization and commiseration. The first meeting of the fall was a joint meeting with neighbors in the Ballston Spa club. Held at the Maple Avenue Schoolhouse in historic Charlton, the speaker was Judy Stacey, the Albany City Gardener, who gave an energetic and entertaining PowerPoint presentation on "A Quadricentennial Celebration of Tulips." Judy is a wonderful speaker and attendees were amazed to learn the details and work involved in making Washington Park the incredible display it is every spring. Visiting with the club members from Ballston Spa after the presentation was fun and encourages attendance at District functions as a chance to see friends. This is something the club hopes to continue.

The club's holiday party was held in early December. This has always been an event enjoyed by all and this year the club was especially pleased to honor Phyllis Sleeper whose name has been inscribed in the Book of Recognition as a dedicated garden club member. Phyllis is a past president, organizer of the Town of Galway yearly spring cleanup with sixth-grade students, and volunteer for many other projects. She is currently serving as vice president of the club after an unexpected vacancy occurred. It is wonderful to be able to recognize her devotion to the club in this way.

Club members continue their support of Galway beautification projects, recycling efforts, and the local food pantry.

Catherine Caine, President

Heritage Garden Club

The Heritage Garden Club had a busy autumn. In September the Club hosted a Standard Flower Show co-chaired by Lottie Wincowski and Martha Van Patten at the Military Museum on Lake Avenue. November

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brought the Luncheon/Card Party co-chaired by June Keane and Brenda Morris at the Gideon Putnam Hotel. Two very successful events!

Workshops for the Flower Show were started in February to teach new members and encourage others to participate and were continued until June. New members were enthusiastic and all were cooperative. The schedule was written by the workshop members and all took part in the committee that was formed. Horticulture, which is always difficult, was handled smoothly by Janice Burns and Sharon Meyer and the hands of many club members.

Husband Tony Eastwood took on the difficult job of staging with assistance from Martha Van Patten. The greatest obstacle was finding judges. Unfortunately, the show was held on the same day as the state board meeting which many judges attend. However, the judges chairperson, Heather Cushing, persisted until she had a complete panel of judges, including one from Massachusetts and one from Vermont.

June Keane provided a delicious breakfast and Lee Nelson, assisted by Marjorie King, provided a scrumptious lunch for the judges.

The show opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony by WRGB anchor Liz Bishop (invited by Pat Pulling) who was very helpful and delightful to work with. She graciously took some pictures and showed them on the 5 o'clock news providing some much appreciated publicity.

Members from Ballston Spa, Glenville Hills, Katrina Trask, and Schuylerville clubs also participated. Remigia Foy of Katrina Trask (past district director) was awarded a blue ribbon for tri-color, and Mary Seymour of Schuylerville won two top awards.

A club cannot have a successful flower show without everyone's cooperation. A show is indeed a lot of work but can bring club members together.

Presenting a flower show in a museum is a worthwhile challenge. A museum helps increase attendance and is much less expensive than other venues.

At the annual Card Party on November 18 a good time was had by all and as usual the meal was *delish!* Kudos to the Gideon Putnam, which always does a good job. All of the attendees took home a door prize and four baskets were raffled off. The club had a white elephant table this year put together by Sharon Meyer and Barbara Tasso and baked goods made by club members were also sold. A cake made by Anita Jaenisch and a pie made by Teri Eastwood were auctioned off. The games went on until 4 pm. It was a very enjoyable afternoon. Think about coming next year.

Lottie Wincowski and June Keane

Katrina Trask Garden Club

District IV's fall luncheon, hosted by the Katrina Trask Garden Club at Longfellow's on October 6, is a reminder of the dynamism and dedication of our membership to our mission. The ever popular "Country Store" was a sellout. And for the first time, each club in the district contributed creative and beautiful arrangements commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Dutch exploration in the Hudson Valley. These arrangements enhanced the theme of the luncheon and the insight into the early Dutch settlers offered by the speaker, Dr. Gehring, Director of the New York State-sponsored New Netherlands Project. Attendees donated canned goods, which, after providing the "filler" for decorative centerpiece baskets, were donated to Saratoga-area food pantries. Heartfelt thanks to all district members who helped to make this event so successful.

Katrina Trask members enjoyed a Christmas luncheon at Prestwick Chase and, following the club's tradition, provided toys for needy children. Regular activities will resume in February with a covered dish luncheon. Shirley Rice will present a program on Fletcher Steele, a noted New York landscape architect. By that time all will be anticipating the snow drops and other signs of spring.

Remigia Foy, Acting President



Arrangements (left and on page 6) made by Katrina Trask Garden Club members during a workshop in November. This type of workshop encourages creativity and fosters confidence in the art of flower arranging.

About Wood Ash

Now is that cozy time of year when we enjoy the comforts of our fireplace or wood stove and produce lots of wood ash. What is more natural than to sprinkle the ash outside and say it is fertilizer? Gardeners should always beware of randomly applying amendments to the soil. Wood ash is a liming agent (about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ the strength of lime, depending on the wood type) and will raise the pH of your soil, which may or may not be beneficial, depending on your original pH. The pH for wood ash is between 9 and 13. An approximate chemical analysis is 0–1–3, meaning zero nitrogen, 1 percent phosphorus, and 3 percent potassium.

Wood ash should never be applied to the soil near acid loving plants such as blueberries, rhododendrons, and azaleas. Nor in soil that will grow potatoes, as it can promote potato scab.

So, should you use wood ash on your property?

First do a soil test. If you have acid soil (pH less than 7.0) you can consider it. Many plants like a slightly acid soil pH 6.5. Wood ash does contain significant potassium and other trace elements that promote plant health. They can even improve the structure and tilth of the soil. A little in the compost pile will keep it neutral, which is the optimum state for activity and especially aids oak leaf and pine needle decomposition. Wood ash may repel slugs and snails as it draws water from their bodies and is uncomfortable. Sprinkle the ash around affected plants. It will only be effective when it is dry and remember that continual applications will eventually raise the soil pH to a toxic level.

Points to consider:

- Take usual precautions for handling dusty material (goggles, dust mask, avoid windy conditions).
- Apply only once a year to a given area.
- Use only wood ash—not ash from burning trash, cardboard, coal, treated wood, etc.
- Do not use on alkaline soil or near acid-loving plants.
- Do not use near seeds or seedlings as it contains too many salts.
- Do not use with nitrogen fertilizers as it reacts to produce ammonia.
- Wood ash needs to be kept dry as the nutrients wash away in the rain.
- Store in a metal container in case there are still live coals.
- Rake the ash into the soil; do not leave clumps or piles which concentrate the ash.
- Wood ash is a liming agent, not a fertilizer—it does not contain nitrogen.

For a list of acid/alkaline plants check:

<http://askville.amazon.com/Plants-alkaline-soils-wood-ash/AnswerDetails.do?requestId=30317496&responseId=30383263>

Liz Gee, Herb and Vegetable Garden Chair

Lake George Community Garden Club

After a busy summer of field trips visiting members' and community gardens, the club "home" was most welcoming. Naturally, members needed to know the latest tricks for closing gardens and planters for the season. Mr. Burt Weber of the Adirondack area BOCES Horticulture Department gave a slide show to explain the many methods of winterizing precious perennials. Mr. Weber added to his lecture the importance of "going green." This conservation has become a large chapter in his teaching curriculum.

Lynette Ackerson, demonstrated the "how-to's" of decorating homes and offices with large, massive plants as well as small ones. Don't forget how much they add to our environment. Remember to damp-dust the leaves of your plants—helps them breath!

The Perennial Planters' meeting on ferns of up-state New York brought a large audience. The fascination of the many local ferns and their habitats has members asking for more information on nurseries that carry a large selection. Thanks to Dorothy Burt for introducing us to the Rabbit's Foot Fern—what an interesting plant that is perfect for indoor collections too.

And of course December means Holiday Greens!

Each year the club decorates pre-made live wreaths to take to fifteen of the Lake George-area public buildings. A Christmas greeting tag lets the residents know that the local garden club is active in their community bringing horticulture of some kind to their lives. This is also a great way for newcomers in town to see what our organization does and perhaps entice a new member to join.

In November, another of the club's community projects was on view at the Queensbury Hotel for the annual Festival of Trees. The project is for the benefit of the Prospect School, a school for children in need of rehabilitation. The community decorates trees and centerpieces which are all for sale—this event gives a huge boost to the school's treasury. All are welcome to participate in this event; for information call Debbie Hoffman.

Club members enjoyed a holiday luncheon at a local restaurant and brought canned food items rather than a gift for exchanging. The food stuffs go to a local women's shelter. When we give we get more rewards in return!

Enjoy the Beautiful Adirondack Winter Season!

*Debbie Hoffman, President
Nancy Cathers, Correspondent*

District IV Calendar of Events

March 23-25	86th Annual State Meeting: Gideon Putnam, Saratoga Springs, NY
April 24	Ballston Spa House & Garden Club Annual Patriotic Tree Planting
April 28	District Board Meeting: Lake George Senior Center, Lake George, NY
May 4	Spring District Meeting & Luncheon: Fort Wm. Henry, Lake George, NY
May 25-27	Districts IV, V, VI Flower Show School, Course II, Oriskany, NY
June 14-16	FGCNYS Symposium: Holiday Inn, Binghamton, NY
June 21	District IV Trip to Lenox and Stockbridge, MA
July 13	District Board Meeting & Luncheon, Pat Wania's Home, Hague, NY

(all are welcome to attend)

District IV Clubs

Ballston Spa House and Garden Club
 Carillon Garden Club
 Elizabethtown-Westport Garden Club
 Glenville Hills Garden Club of Saratoga County
 Heritage Garden Club
 Indian Lake Garden Club
 Katrina Trask Garden Club
 Lake George Community Garden Club
 Schuylerville Garden Club

