

West Newbury Garden Club



Next Meeting – April 6th - 6:45 pm - Annex Building

All Things Begonias by Alison Reyes



Our April meeting will feature Betsy Szymczak, an expert gardener of all things Begonias. After teaching microbiology for 35 years at several local colleges and universities, Betsy retired and pursued her passion for growing flowers and vegetables.

As a native of Natick MA, Betsy is a member of the American Begonia Society (ABS), and is an ABS certified Begonia judge for the Boston and Philadelphia flower shows. Additionally, Betsy grows and judges Dahlias and is a member of the American Dahlia Association (ADS). Members will learn about the history of begonias and how to grow and propagate these versatile plants. Each season brings us new opportunities to grow beautiful Begonias! Join us for an informative evening.

Planning ahead for our May meeting and potluck dinner, we are using the theme “April Showers Bring May Flowers” and have decided on the following assignments for food. If your last name begins with M-R- please plan to bring an appetizer, S-Z- please plan to bring a main course or salad, or H-L- please plan to bring a dessert.

*Members are asked to please bring newspapers to the April Meeting for the pot drive!
See below for more details.*

March Meeting - by Alison Reyes



Our March meeting featured Michele Fronk Schuckel who shared her knowledge and expertise about gardening in a warming world. Michelle is the founder and principal designer of Natural Selections Gardens where she works with clients to advocate and protect our ecosystem and incorporate native plants into their gardens.

Michelle described how global warming is threatening our ecosystem by raising sea levels, degrading coral reefs, eradicating wildlife habitats, and exposing us to heat waves, floods, and ice-free arctic summers. Sustainable gardening and landscaping techniques can slow warming by reducing carbon emissions and home gardeners can be an important part of the solution. Michele also explained the steps we can take to halt global warming such as composting our own food waste, eating less meat, turning down the thermostat in our home or office, mulching leaves or grass clippings for compost, and establishing rain gardens in our own backyard.

Michele encouraged members to plant natives to support and halt climate change. She described how native plants support and invasive plants disrupt local food webs. She suggested the planting of Tallamy's top native trees which include: the oak family (white, red, pin), black cherry, willow, Betula family (birch, white, cherry, black, mahogany), poplar, crabapple, red maple, northern white pine, scrub pine, and hawthorn. Additionally, we should identify and eradicate invasive plants to further support climate change efforts. To learn more about this topic visit:

Michele@NaturalSelectionsGardens.com

Local Organizations that Address Climate Change - by Elisa Grammer



West Newbury hosts several organizations working actively to address climate change. Each group includes WNGC members, and each would invite more to join.

The [West Newbury Climate Change Resiliency Committee](#) works to identify threats from climate change and to find solutions. The group has secured the town's status as a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Community and will be seeking an MVP action grant to study River Road's vulnerability to sea

level rise, storm surge, and storm runoff flooding.

The [West Newbury Energy and Sustainability Committee](#) promotes energy efficiency and the transition to renewable energy sources. It has obtained Green Community status for the town and has reduced both environmental impacts and town costs through grants to make town infrastructure more efficient. The group is responsible for the Main Street solar system which has produced significant amounts of clean power while saving the town around \$55K/year in electric bills.

The [West Newbury Tree Committee](#) provides residents and the town information about our trees and forests and promotes the identification, protection, and preservation of our trees. This group is responsible for the tree walk at Mill Pond, sponsored programs, and has offered Arbor Day sapling giveaways.

The [West Newbury Wild and Native \(WN2\)](#) is a non-profit group educating about and advocating for native plants and control of non-natives. The group offers numerous programs and has successfully worked to encourage the town to hire interns to manage invasive species on town land.

Penny Pines Project – Last Opportunity to Donate! - by Diane Teed



On Thursday, April 6th, the WNGC will collect your final contributions for the NH and CA national forests. Many members have generously donated (and we thank you). For those of you who were unable to attend the last meeting, please bring your coins, bills, or checks payable to the "West Newbury Garden Club".

We will share the results of your "reforestation" efforts after the final donation to the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts (GCFM). For questions, contact Diane Teed.

Looking for Presenters for 2023-2024!



It's that time of year when we begin looking for six engaging garden club speakers for the 2023-24 year. If you have any recommendations, we want to hear from you. We also we have many talented gardeners in our club! If you are interested in presenting, please contact Maureen Harris by May 1st.

What Should I do with my Hydrangeas? – by Jane Jeffers



It's time for the proverbial question about what to do with hydrangeas in the spring. Should I cut them down? Should I leave them alone? Based on trial and error and courses I've taken, I'd like to provide some simple advice on what to do this spring with your *Hydrangea Macrophylla* and *Hydrangea Serrata*. This advice does not pertain to *Hydrangea Aborescens* (think Annebelle, Invincible Spirit), *Hydrangea Paniculata* (think tree like with long panicles), or Oak Leaf *Hydrangea*.

Older varieties of *Hydrangea Macrophylla* (Nikko Blue, Endless Summer series, Cityline series) bloom from old wood growth. Newer varieties bloom on both old wood and new wood but even newer varieties are challenged by a cold NE winter. Although this past winter was relatively mild, the February arctic blast most likely caused the stems and existing nodes on *Hydrangea Macrophylla* to die back. Nodes close to the ground are more protected and less vulnerable to winter elements and in a normal winter, often survive.

So, what should you do? Nothing at this time. Wait until the weather warms up (May-June at least) when you can tell which parts of your *Hydrangea Macrophylla* have survived. This should be obvious – the nodes have opened and green leaves have appeared. This can be anywhere along the stem but most likely the top of the stem will be dead. When there is no question of what is alive vs. dead, it's time to clip off the dead part of the stem and leave the rest. If nothing on the stem is alive, clip the entire stem at the base of the plant as close to the ground as possible. It is important to clean out the base of the plant so your *Hydrangea Macrophylla* can produce new growth. Cut down dead stems and clear out the leaves and make sure your hydrangea gets plenty of water, light and air.

Now that you have trimmed your hydrangea of all the dead "wood", it's time to fertilize. Please be aware of internet advice about hydrangeas that ranges from "don't fertilize" to "fertilize heavily". The following recommendation, which I sometimes follow, comes from "Hydrangeas in the North Getting Blooms in the Colder Climates" by Tim Boebel. Tim recommends fertilizing with Mir-Acid which has a heavy nitrogen content. Nitrogen is needed to get the plant to GROW so it can produce blooms. Those little nodes with green leaves you saw in May need to grow into a stem with up to nine nodes before the blossom actually emerges. Heavy doses of nitrogen can burn a plant so please follow directions carefully. Our short summers don't always allow hydrangeas to grow enough to bloom, so this little boost of nitrogen can speed up the growth process. *Hydrangea Serrata* (think Tuff Stuff series) are heartier and should survive the NE winter. They are also prone to die back at times, so follow the same steps to remove dead "wood". Let's hope for an abundance of blossoms this summer! Good luck.

Gearing up for our Annual Plant Sale Pot Drive – By Lori Boudrow



The club will host a Pot Drive the weekend of Saturday, April 1 - Sunday April 2nd "Old" Town Hall (across from GAR Library) 10:00 am - 4:00 pm A Drop-Off location will be set up along the east wall of at the "Old" Town Hall. We are in need of pots in various shapes and sizes. Wide pots (like tulip bulb pot) and hanging basket pots. **PLEASE** - no small pots (less than 6" across) **The Digging Committee needs your saved newspapers! Please bring them to the April 6th meeting!** Crumbled sheets use less soil making pots lighter to lift and carry!

We are also in need of **those sturdy oversized tray-like "box-tops"** for our plant sale shoppers. We need hundreds, so start collecting when you shop stores like BJ's and Costco. Or drop in as you're driving past non-members are welcome to these too!

Plant Sale Committees - by Carrie Hometh

Committee chairs have worked together to carefully compile a list of members. Each chair will be in touch with their assigned members with more details.

- Publicity – Jane Jeffers
- Native – Linda Schaeffer
- Sun – Lynn Boyd
- Digging – Helena Dion
- Shade – Sarah Robinson
- Bake Sale – Maureen Harris
- Set Up, Break Down, Tally/Holding, and Check Out Committees – Lori Boudrow
- And your fearless leader – Carrie Hometh

We Need Plants! Please start thinking about which of your plants should be thinned and ask your friends, neighbors, and family if they have plants to donate. If you or your loved ones need help, please contact the digging committee.

Wood Plant Markers will be distributed at the April and May meetings. Please write the plant name, color and (if possible) growing conditions on the marker. **Do not price your plants!** The sun, native and shade committees will do this for you.

Potting the Plants: Pots are available at the Town Hall vault and the key to the Town Hall is available at the library. Pots will also be available at the May meeting. Please plant in a pot which presents the plant well. Be sure to make the pot look full, even using newspaper at the bottom of the pot so that it does not become too heavy.

Which plants sell best? Natives, perennials that attract bees and butterflies, trays of ground covers, hostas, and shrubs. Please do not bring annuals.

We Need Wagons! Shoppers can wander around the sale easier if they can load a wagon with their plants. We also need trucks and SUVs to transport the plants from native (Linda Schaeffer's house), sun (Lynn Boyd's house), and shade (Sarah Robinson's house) to the Training Field on Friday afternoon, May 19th.

We'll be discussing all these items at the May Meeting. Please plan to attend to speak with your committee chair and pick up plant markers.

Rainwater Harvesting: What I've Learned So Far! - by Linda Schaeffer



On Tuesday, April 11th from 7-8 PM, the West Newbury Wild and Native and G.A.R. Memorial Library will jointly host a Zoom session on this topic. As Massachusetts continues to experience droughts and high summer temperatures, West Newbury resident Ray Cook will provide valuable techniques on how to collect and use rainwater in our yard.

Topics will include water collection, rain barrel sizes, flow rates, pumping systems, and drip irrigation. Ray has a PhD in Civil Engineering and Materials and Structures from Cornell University and has taught civil engineering and structural design at both the undergraduate and graduate level at the University of New Hampshire for over thirty years. Visit this link to register: <https://westnewburylibrary.assabetinteractive.com/calendar/rainwater-harvesting-what-i-ve-learned-so-far/>

Welcome New Members!

Marlene (Marley) Switzer
West Newbury

Alexis Katkevich
West Newbury

WNGC Newsletter
Alison Reyes

Photography
Anne Selig

Contributing Columnist
Andrea Caswell, WNGC Member

WNGC President/Website
Lori Boudrow

Facebook
Chris Gerzon

West Newbury Garden Club
P.O Box 11 West Newbury, MA 01985
Email: mrcwebmaster@comcast.net

WNGC Privacy Statement

We respect the privacy of our members. Membership information in the Yearbook and/or in the Newsletter is for WNGC use only. Member Contact information is not to be released or used except within and for WNGC communication, and never for commercial purposes.

WNGC is a member of the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts. Read their quarterly newsletter *Mayflower* for articles, announcements, events and workshops.

Stay Connected to WNGC

Note: WNGC Board meetings are held the 2nd Monday of each month at Board members' homes.
Please contact Lori Boudrow if you wish to attend.