



A POSY PICKER'S PAPER
New Meadows Garden Club
Topsfield, Massachusetts
May 18th through June 30, 2021



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

Check out The Green Thumb Corner for seasonal gardening tips and the scoop on what trees and hail stones have in common!

May 26



As you know, as a service to the Topsfield community, our club plants and maintains the Veteran's Memorial Garden at the flagpole in the Pine Grove Cemetery. We will need a group of mighty garden club members to help plant the garden in preparation for Memorial Day events. We will be starting at 10 am, if the weather cooperates. May 27th at the same time is our rain date. Please bring your gardening gloves, trowels, kneelers and gallon water bottles if you have them. This will be a fun morning to finally be together while we perform a good service for our club's hometown.

June 15

▶ Remember to renew your club membership with Janet Hanson by June 15th!

NOTES



▶ A reminder from Treasurer, Shirley Holt! *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. Shirley 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.*

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*****Reminder:** *Attention all Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs! If you will have an annual Committee Report for this abbreviated garden club year, please submit it to Secretary Joline Yeaton as soon as possible for inclusion in her Annual Report to be distributed electronically in June.*

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



It's been a tough year for all of us and those dear to us. Best wishes to everyone for better days ahead, good health and lots of happiness.

Our Hostess Committee is still working on the possibility of having an in-person Annual Meeting to end this garden club year on an up note. What a treat it would be if it were possible for all of us to be together again after all the distancing required during the pandemic. Please check your messages often for updates as they become available. Keep your fingers crossed!

ISLAND UPDATE

As you know, a very important part of our civic work in our club's hometown of Topsfield is the maintenance and care of two traffic islands located at the intersection of Prospect Street and River Road and at the intersection of Route 97 and Linebrook Road. We consistently receive compliments on the beauty of these islands from passers-by, which is always nice to hear. A few years ago, we sadly lost the magnificent Weeping Cherry tree, which was the centerpiece of the island at Prospect Street. Old age and road salt may have been the culprits. So, this week we were so happy to hear that Shirley Holt and her husband, Glen, will donate a Hydrangea plant from their beautiful garden to fill the space left behind in the island. This will add still more interest and another dimension to the island. Hydrangea is a native plant and our local pollinators love them! Many thanks to Shirley and Glen for their generosity. In addition, the funds that we earned from our very successful Mother's Day Teacup Sale will make it possible for the club to purchase mulch for both islands, which always helps the plants weather the hot and dry conditions over the summer. We may need extra hands for this and also volunteers to do weekly maintenance on both islands over the summer, so please stay tuned and help out if you can! ☀

Attention All Members

All members will be invited to a meeting over the summer to discuss creative ideas for our club going forward, a design for the future! We will discuss what we value most about our club and your thoughts and ideas for our club going forward will certainly be valued and appreciated. Be on the lookout for more details, which will come your way very soon.





...Bits and pieces...

Mother's Day Teacup Sale

The workshop!



The sale!



This year's Arbor Day tree planted at the Steward School is a Sargent Flowering Crabapple Tree. Our club contributes to the cost of Arbor Day trees planted at the school each year. As with so many events this past year, due to COVID restrictions, there was no formal ceremony to celebrate the day. Maybe next year!

...Green Thumb Corner follows...

Green Thumb Corner

Well, it's that time of year once again. Everything outside, and inside as well if I've opened my windows to let in some glorious, fresh air of spring, is covered in a yellow fluffy blanket of "fairy dust". Yikes, it's POLLEN! While I'm fortunate not to have many allergies to this stuff (knock wood!), it's a pain to rid my world of this gift of nature during and after its annual assault. For those of you with allergies, it's a whole different challenge. Since many of us are gardeners, I thought we could talk a bit about how gardening can be made more user-friendly for those who suffer from allergies.



First of all, for the allergy sufferer, gardening on days when the winds are calm and the pollen count is low are definitely preferable. Look for cool, cloudy or damp days. Also, late afternoon is better than early in the morning. Your gardening attire should consist of long-sleeved shirts, long pants and gloves. Don't forget sunglasses, and yes, a mask! Since most of us are so very done with wearing masks after our experience during the pandemic of this past year, suggesting this will probably not make you happy. But, the upside is that you probably have a good supply of disposable masks on hand right now and they can definitely be helpful in this instance! And while you are working outdoors, don't go out of your way to touch your face and eyes.

Once you're done for the day, wash your hands and rinse your eyes to remove any clinging pollen. Also, changing your clothing is a must. Do consider showering and shampooing your hair at night to prevent pollens from getting into your bedding.

For us gardeners, spring is a popular time to visit garden centers in search of new trees, shrubs and flowers to doll up our yards, and there are some choices that are better for those who suffer from allergies. First of all, choose plants with bright, colorful and fragrant flowers. Generally, these plants are insect-pollinated. The pollen they produce is too large and heavy to be carried by wind and is instead carried by insects and animals from plant to plant. Good choices are begonias, daisies, geraniums, impatiens, hostas, pansies, petunias, phlox, salvia, sunflowers, zinnias and bulbs like tulips, hyacinth, crocuses, daffodils, irises and lilies. Shrubs that get the green light are azalea, hydrangea, rose and boxwood. Among preferable trees are apple, cherry, dogwood, lilac, magnolia, pear, plum and red maple.

And a word about native plants...planting native varieties helps since they are easier to grow, rather than non-native plants, which are often stressed and consequently release more pollen. And, something new to me, most pollen comes from male trees and shrubs! Who knew? So, to make your environment easier on your allergies, plant female trees and shrubs instead.

Two last tips...think twice about planting near your windows allowing pollen to blow right in and be sure to take your allergy medication before you begin gardening rather than after symptoms start!

Happy sneeze-free gardening. ♦

With the peak season for thunderstorms in our area coming soon, here's an interesting question: what do trees have in common with hailstones? Any guesses? The answer is rings. We are all aware that trees form annual growth rings, which will indicate the age of a tree when looking at a cross section of its trunk. Cross sections of hailstones also have rings. Here's the scoop on how these rings get there: first a wee bit about the science of thunderstorm clouds.



I'll try my best to be brief! Thunderstorms are fed by an inflow of rising warm, moist and unstable air, referred to as updraft. While this is going on, small ice kernels form in the very cold air aloft. Most thunderstorms do contain at least some of these ice kernels (hail), but many times these do not reach the ground because they are small, and wind up melting in the warmer layer of air in our lower atmosphere. When this happens, the storm very likely has a weak updraft of that warm, moist and

...more on the next page...

unstable air. When a thunderstorm has a very strong updraft, sometimes as high as 100 miles per hour, these ice kernels actually get blown back up into the cloud and add more layers of ice. This can happen over and over again, until the hailstone gets too heavy for the updraft to keep it aloft, at which time it finally falls to the ground. The rings inside a hailstone are the layers of ice formed each time the it is carried upwards by the storm's updraft. So, there you have it! And a piece of trivia...the largest hailstone ever measured in our country fell in South Dakota in 2010 and measured eight inches in diameter and weighed almost two pounds! ♦



I was out in my garden this morning, amazed at how quickly my Japanese Peonies have come up with the warm days we have had of late. The buds are ready to burst into the magnificent flowers I so cherish each year. This variety consistently blooms a few weeks before the traditional double peonies we are used to seeing. I have those in my garden as well. So, I thought that today might be a good time to talk a bit about these exquisite perennials.

First, a few interesting facts about peonies. They are native to Europe, Asia and Western North America, and can grow and thrive almost anywhere in our country, including Alaska, where they enjoy the cold climate! If a peony plant is happy, it can bloom for more than 100 years without much attention. There are two distinct groups...herbaceous peonies and tree peonies...with several varieties within each group. Herbaceous peonies grow to about 3 feet and tree peonies about 11 feet. Throughout history, peonies were used for medicinal purposes treating such ailments as headaches, asthma and nightmares. In addition, it was once thought that growing peonies would ward off evil spirits. And, all parts of a peony are edible! I've never tried these, but read that, in the Middle Ages, peony blossoms were used as flavoring for drinks and garnishes for summer salads. There are recipes available on-line if you wish to look further into this! And what about the ants? If any of you have grown peonies, you might have noticed the unopened buds covered in ants. The sight of this may be a bit disconcerting, but not to worry! The ants are actually attacking bud-eating pests while they are eating the peony's nectar. The sugary droplets on the outside of the flower buds, as well as any honeydew that might have been produced by scale insects and aphids that may have taken up residence on the plant, attract the ants. So, the end of the story is, welcome the ants, don't eradicate them! All of this said, my advice to you is to always give any stems you cut from your plant a gentle upside down shake before placing them in a container to bring indoors so that you don't bring the ants in with them!

Now a little about planting and growing peonies...peonies prefer to be planted in the early fall, although they can be planted in spring. However, most experts agree that they don't do as well after spring planting and will lag behind those planted in fall by about a year. Peonies prefer a sunny location with well-drained and humus-rich soil. They will tolerate a spot that receives a half day of sun, but will bloom best in full sun. Choose your site well, because these plants don't take too well to transplanting. In my experience, I find this to be true! Also think about providing some shelter from high winds, especially when your plants are in bloom. Regarding planting, you can find bare root planting tips online. My guess is that most of you will buy container-grown plants, so here are some tips on how to settle your "sweetie" nicely in the ground: dig a hole that's about twice as wide as the root ball, but no deeper. Set the plant inside your hole, making sure that the soil surface in the pot is level with the surface of the ground. Planting deeper than this would result in a plant that might grow well, but might flower very little. Be sure to water your newly planted peonies at least once a week, unless it rains, trying not to get water on the leaves or the flowers. As your plant gets used to its new home, you can back off on watering a bit, but be sure to continue watering if there is no rainfall for an extended period of time. A yearly application of an organic, all-purpose fertilizer is all peonies need to be healthy. Be sure to keep mulch away from the base of your plants otherwise the plant will react as if it is planted too deeply. Deadhead the blossoms as they begin to fade and cut all the foliage to the ground in fall to avoid any over-wintering diseases. And there you have it! Enjoy! ♥

Happy Summer to all and be well!