



# A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

March 16th through April 20, 2021



*Did you ever wonder how birds keep their feet warm? Check out this month's Green Thumb for all the details!*

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

*Keeping in touch during the Pandemic and at a time of social distancing. Perhaps the time is fast approaching when we can safely be together again!*

April 20



*Our next board meeting will be a Zoom meeting at 10 am. Stay tuned board members, and be prepared to fire up your electronics for this meeting. A Zoom invitation will be sent prior to the meeting.*

## NOTES



### *In Memory of Honorary Member, Jean Ziegler.*

*As has been our club's tradition since 2012, a book has been specially chosen by our board and donated to the Topsfield Town Library in memory of Jean Ziegler, who sadly passed away late in 2020. The title of this book is "Flights of Passage: An Illustrated Natural History of Bird Migration" by Mike Unwin and David Tipling. Jean took pleasure in the birds who visited her yard and we are sure that she would have enjoyed paging through this book herself.*

*Rest in peace, Jean.*

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



*Good news!* If all falls into place as we hope and plan, with your help the *Mother's Day Tea Cup Sale* we planned for last year, which was cancelled due to COVID 19, will be a reality this year! We anticipate that the sale will take place at the Topsfield Post Office sidewalk on two days...Friday, May 7th and Saturday, May 8th. from 9 am to 12 pm. We are hoping to offer 40 live or silk floral designed teacups and mugs for sale at \$10 each. Mary Connor has offered workshop space in her garage for those who would like to whip up their designs with fellow members in a safe socially distant environment on Thursday May 6th. Masks will be a must.

Please plan to lend a hand or two! Most importantly, to help with planning for this event, please let Jane or Sandy know whether you plan to attend the workshop. RSVP by April 6th! Details about time of day will follow soon. Also we need to know how many teacups or mugs each of you will design, either at home or at the workshop. If you have any extra teacups you wish to donate for others to fill, please let us know that too.

For those who wish to attend the workshop, bring your teacups or mugs and your own materials, including oasis foam. Remember, you can either use silk flowers, live flowers, or even small plants.

Look for more information, tips and nifty tricks in your inbox prior to the workshop!

*Perhaps an excellent upcoming local event to safely enjoy...*

**"Enjoying Neighborhood Gardens,  
Celebrating our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary"**

**A Garden Tour presented by  
The Danvers Garden Club, Est. 1930-1931**

**Saturday, June 19, 2021  
9:00 am to 3:30 pm (rain or shine)**  
Please follow all State pandemic guidelines in effect

Garden Tour Tickets: \$20 in advance  
\$25 on Tour day (sold at all Tour locations-cash/check only)  
Make your check payable to Danvers Garden Club

Please provide your Name, Address, Tel. #, & Email  
Mail to: P.O. Box 167, Danvers, MA 01923  
Questions? Email us at danversgardenclub@gmail.com

This self-guided tour will have 10 different locations in Danvers to visit showcasing our neighbors' creative, whimsical and beautiful home gardens. This is a great way to spend time with friends and family enjoying these gardens, and also for getting some great ideas for your own garden! There will also be light refreshments and a Drawing held with chances to win beautifully themed baskets. Be sure to order your tickets early to get the discounted price. Note: State pandemic guidelines in effect will be followed.

*...Green Thumb Corner follows...*

## Green Thumb Corner

*I was standing at my kitchen sink a few days ago, gazing out the window at the wintry landscape outside, and at the birds who are brave enough to stay around during this unforgiving season, busily cleaning out our birdfeeders yet again. Filling the feeders has become a daily event around here, with more trips to replenish our supply of seed than trips to the supermarket for food! So, it was no*



*surprise to me when the following question popped into my mind...“How do birds who don’t skip town during winter keep warm” at a time when I have little desire to venture out into the frozen world that surrounds us, regardless of how much I bundle up? In researching this topic, I am reminded at how awesome instinct is in nature. Birds’ survival during winter depends on planning. All cold-climate birds begin to pack on body weight as soon as late summer and fall in anticipation of the cold winter to come. They literally become “eating machines”, inevitably leading to rapidly emptying birdfeeders! Some birds actually consume as much as 60 percent of their body weight in food each and every day in an effort to pack on another layer of insulation in the form of fat. I would not recommend this strategy for us humans, but it does work for our birds! In addition to providing an extra layer of insulation, fat also performs another important function for birds. It actually fuels nighttime muscle movement, called “shivering”. Muscle contractions during cold nights help birds stay warm until morning. We know well that physical exertion does make our bodies nice and warm and even sweaty at times!*

*And, your cute little Chickadees are even more clever. They practice what is called “controlled hypothermia” by which they are able to let their body temperatures drop up to 25 percent to conserve energy for the cold winter nights. They can actually drop their body temperatures from their normal 107.6 degrees F to 80.6 degrees F! How smart is that?*

*Another way birds keep warm is by growing an extra layer of down or soft feathers, which insulates their bodies...similar to donning a down jacket! Feathers keep birds warm by trapping pockets of air around their bodies but must be maintained to function properly. To keep their feathers clean, flexible and dry, some birds produce a special oil at the base of their tails, which they use to weather-proof their feathers. Other birds grow special feathers that disintegrate into a powder, which they use as a waterproofing agent. This process, called “preening,” provides a water resistant top layer and a toasty warm inner layer.*

*But what about birds’ feet??? We know how hard it is to keep our fingers and toes warm on a very cold day. Unlike human feet, a bird’s foot can withstand low temperatures without damage since they are mostly composed of tendons and bones with not much muscle or nerve tissue. Our feet are completely different in this regard. But this doesn’t mean that cold feet isn’t an issue for our feathered friends. What is a bird to do? Mother Nature to the rescue once again! She has provided some birds with a system by which they can maintain a core temperature different from that in their extremities. It’s a pretty interesting system. Keeping an entire foot warm takes quite a bit of energy. So, some birds allow their feet to get pretty close to freezing, even though blood from their core is still being supplied there. The cool blood that comes back from the feet travels through veins near arteries that are sending warm blood from the body back down to the feet. This “heat exchange” maintains heat in the bird’s core and sends a little heat down to the feet to prevent freezing. Ingenious! Additionally, birds have special scales on their feet and legs that help minimize heat loss. I’m afraid we humans can only rely on our fur-lined boots!*

*And, like all of us, birds like to cuddle, and do it in shrubs, trees, tree cavities and sometimes use available nesting boxes.*

*Considering all that birds instinctively know to do to survive our winters, you can still help them by providing food and water sources in your yard. Seeds, nuts, cracked corn and suet are great menu items, and a heated bird bath is heaven for your backyard feathered friends! ♦*

