



# Lexington Field & Garden Club

144 Years of Making Lexington More Beautiful

Member of the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts

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## Co-President's Letter

Do you remember how in my last month's letter I went on and on about how beautiful my gardens were and how exciting it was to see new plants popping out of the ground and discovering all the lovely things that had been planted by the previous owner? I felt like I was in a romantic English novel as I sauntered around the yard, oohing and aahing, taking pictures and imagining where I should put the garden bench.

Well, I have a new viewpoint of my yard and everything that's in it. Now I feel like Indiana Jones, swashbuckling my way through the jungle that is my property, needing to wield a machete as I attempt to get from the back yard to the front. I was away for a month and you would have thought that when I returned, I had discovered an untouched continent. Where I previously looked over a bed of daffodils, I now have green stuff growing that is as tall as me. The black raspberries growing along the edge of the knee-high "meadow" area have been swamped by a huge expanse of more green stuff that is twice as tall as me! The lamb's ears all have twisty tops, the hollyhocks are toppling over and I can't see the street because of the way the bushes and trees have exploded with monstrous growth that has no rhyme or reason. I am intimately familiar now with American pokeweed, not to mention many other unwanted species! Where are the groundhogs when I need them? Total chaos.

However, I still love every inch of the place...of course, I haven't started to clean it up yet, so I may soon be singing a different tune. But the chaos that exists in my yard seems to match the chaos that we're all dealing with as we try to figure out what's safe and prudent for us to do. Bridget and I are keeping abreast of all the government guidelines for gatherings as we approach the fall and the start of a new LFGC season. We have decided that we will be holding our regular big club meetings via a Zoom format for at least until the end of the year. We will "gather", via Zoom, at the regularly scheduled times, as usual. As we work out the details, we will be sending you information about how to connect. If you're not familiar with Zoom, this is the time to solicit help from anyone who can help you get set up for our first meeting on September 9th. If comfortable doing so, perhaps a few of you would like to safely gather together to view the programs. This will be a new experience for LFGC, but as we all know, gardening people are adaptable and resilient!

In the meantime, wish me luck as I encounter things I've never seen before as I try to regain some semblance of that lovely oasis of calm and tranquility that was my spring garden.

Take care and stay well,

**Ruthanne Igoe**

Co-President



**Kitty Galaitsis shares this timely article about multi-talented bees.**

## **Bees as Horticulturalists?**

Timing is critical in the symbiotic relationship between flowers and pollinators. In a time of climate change the emergence of hungry bees and the blooming flowers that they need may be out of sync. Bees need warmth to hatch and flowers need the right sunlight. According to Science Magazine, researchers in universities in Switzerland, France and England have observed that bumble bees, facing pollen scarcity, will turn to damaging the leaves of flowerless plants which somehow speeds up flower production. Scientists noticed that the severity of leaf damage varies with local flower availability. Scientists have studied this both in the lab and outdoors. The bees are able to fast track flowering, possibly to the disadvantage of the flowers but to the benefit of bees. Since mechanical human damage does not produce flower acceleration, scientists wonder if the bumble bees are injecting some kind of chemical. If scientists can decipher the molecular pathways used by the bumble bees they might be able to speed up plant flowering by as much as a month. This would have implications for providing pollination systems with plasticity and resilience in coping with climate change.

From: *The Secret Lives of Bees as Horticulturalists?* By Lars Chittka, page 824, May 22, 2020 edition.



## **August Gardening Tips**

**by Ashley Rooney**

Try to water early in the morning to reduce the loss of water to evaporation during the hottest days.

Container and hanging plants may need additional water later in the day if hot and windy conditions prevail. Check plants again at day's end to see if any additional water is necessary.

Keep up with deadheading bedding plants and roses. The flowers on dahlias will need to be cut off once they've started to fade.

Use a rain gauge to determine how much water the garden gets from each rainfall. The general rule of thumb is about an inch or two of water each week with deep, infrequent watering as opposed to the more frequent shallow watering, but this really depends on a number of factors such as type of soil, types of plants, and weather conditions.

Among the many attributes of mulch is its ability to conserve soil moisture and moderate soil temperature — just what many of our plants need during these hot, dry August days. Mulched areas also keep weeds at bay so we can spend more time enjoying our flowers and vegetables harvests and less weeding. Straw mulches work well in the vegetable garden. Finer cocoa or buckwheat hulls accentuate more delicate herbs. Shredded bark mulches are attractive and long lasting in ornamental beds.

Pinching back herbs to stop flowering will keep the best flavor in the leaves and encourage branching. Herbs can be air dried, dried quickly in the microwave or frozen. If, when chopping your herbs, you find you have leftovers, pop them in an ice cube tray with water and freeze them into herb-ice cubes.

Tomato hornworms are large, green caterpillars that feed on the leaves of tomatoes and related plants. Hand-pick or control with *Bacillus thuringiensis*. Do not remove caterpillars that are covered in white pupae as they have been parasitized by beneficial wasps.

The very best time to divide perennials is late summer after they have finished blooming. Prepare the spot where you will plant the new divisions by digging a hole deep enough to cover the base of the new clumps. I have been known to just take half a plant, but you can dig all the way around and under the clump.



## Repurposing at its Best!

By Georgia Harris

How do we keep items that no longer serve a purpose out of landfills? How can unwanted furniture, glass, or even bits of scrap metal become sculptures in our gardens? Lexington Garden Club members share their creative uses for unwanted items.

Do you have your own creative use for discarded items? Email your idea to **Ruthanne Igoe** with the subject line “Re-Use Materials” and it may appear in a future issue of the newsletter.

**Christine Kochanski** has been making glass flowers for years. They brighten her garden all year round and are a unique way to keep the garden colorful during the cold winter months. Glass flowers are a fun way to repurpose glass items you may have but never use, like a wedding present or sentimental piece that doesn't serve much purpose except for collecting dust. If you don't have enough glass items, it's easy to pick some up at your local thrift stores, estate sales, and flea markets. Chris keeps hers outside all year. Shiny glass flowers in a window box with snow is a lovely sight and reminds us that spring is not far away.



*Bouquets of glass flowers brighten the garden when there is a lull in blooming plants.*



***Christina Gamota finds ways to re-use materials in everything from old cut down tree limbs to chains. Even brightly colored paint branches become unique garden sculptures.***

Ever drive by a house and see old chairs waiting to be picked up and taken to the dump? You can give that chair a new life by taking out the cushioned seat, which is often just attached with a few screws, and painting the chair in a fun eye-catching color. I found you can usually use an old plastic nursery pot with a large rim to fit right into the base of the seat and then plant your thriller, spiller, and filler flower pot to your delight. This is a fun and unique way to keep two used items from the landfill.



***Isn't it fun to figure out how to give new life to something destined for the landfill?***

This pandemic has also been hard on our china. It seems every day was a new disaster for another plate, cup, or saucer. A great reuse for all these colorful lovely chards are garden stepping stones. They are very simple to make; all you need is a plastic form, dry cement (available at craft stores) and china shards, or even leftover bits of tile or even seashells.



***Blue willow china stepping stone with Asclepias tuberosa, butterfly weed. The orange and blue contrast nicely and bring a pop to the walkway. A stepping stone peeks out from Sporobolus heterolepis, Prairie dropseed, and Clethra alnifolia, sweet pepperbush.***

## **Water Hyacinths Available!**



If you have a water garden and are in need of water hyacinths, let me know. I have so many I have them in buckets now!

— **Georgia Harris**



## A Way to Soothe the Soul During Quarantine

By Bridget Galdes

The first month of quarantine was novel. I had never been through anything like this before and learning to deal with it took all the energy I had. Easter rolled around and by then the novelty was wearing off. By mid June, I was ready for it to be over. I was itching to be out and about. But, where to safely go? Gatherings were limited to ten. Theaters, malls, restaurants, sports events, places of worship were all closed. But there was one thing I could do...visit gardens and practice safe distancing in open spaces.

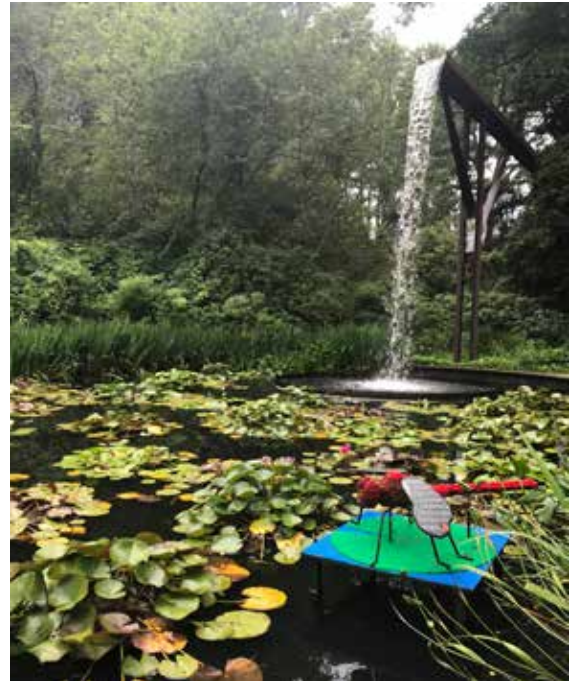


I visited the Heritage Garden and Museum in Sandwich with a friend. What a nice break! Since it was not crowded we were able to keep a safe 10 ft distance from everyone else and we could drop the masks. The gardens were like salve to our souls. We were greeted by a long swath of astilbe in the background and impatiens in the front. The chairs were beckoning us to sit and relax and take it all in.

The sensory gardens, besides being beautiful to look at, were segregated by colors and in every patch there were the same colored poppies — my favorite uncommon flower. The hum of bees was like calming music, the flower scents better than the best perfume.

Then we came to the waterfall that plunged into a pond full of different colored lilies. A large red dragonfly rested nearby. One couldn't miss it! It was part of a LEGO brick exhibit that was being held at the gardens. What a treat for young kids and adults of all ages! The sound of the waterfall was more refreshing than an iced drink itself!

The hydrangeas were not in full bloom then. They would come later. A full size bumble bee sat in the middle of the pollinator garden and dominated the view. It was, after all, another LEGO brick exhibit!



By then we were getting slightly overheated and tired so we took a ride in one of the transportation vehicles that circled the premises. We saw a succulent garden where all kinds of succulents hung against a wall in what looked like picture frames. These succulents, the driver/guide told us, were part of an experiment that seemed to be working. The plants were thriving, growing and multiplying. “How do they survive the winter?” I asked naively. “The frames are unhinged and brought inside,” answered the guide.



We drove by the last LEGO exhibit — a group of three birds — a cardinal, a flicker and a goldfinch. Delightful!

“I must bring my grandson to see this,” I thought to myself. I had such a good time that I decided, there and then, to become a member and visit the garden more often than just once a year. This garden visit brought on a much needed healing from the isolation of the quarantine. What a gift!



## Go For a Walk!

The Mass Audubon Trails on many wildlife sanctuaries are open throughout the state. Always check their website for guidelines and hours: [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org)

### Here are some favorite Mass Audubon sites...

Habitat, Belmont

Wellfleet Bay, Wellfleet

Boston Nature Center, Mattapan

Broadmoor, Natick

Drumlin Farm, Lincoln

### Other suggestions....

The Lexington Historical Society Gardens

DeCordova Museum, Lincoln

Boston Public Garden, Boston

Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston

Tower Hill, Hudson



## Planting Tips

by Karen Droisen

As part of the Summer Gardening series done in conjunction with Cary Memorial Library, I undertook some research about planting in difficult spots, which Ashley and I shared during the program. But in case you missed it:

### Filling in under trees

In general, to determine what to plant under trees, look at trees in the wild for clues.

#### Plants for under pine trees

Cut lower branches to allow more sun and make it easy to landscape. The lower branches are not attractive anyway because they get so little sun. Pine tree roots are deep so digging will not be especially difficult.

**Ajuga** (Europe, Asia, and Africa native)

**Sweet woodruff** (Europe and north Africa native)

**Hosta** (northeast Asia native)

**Asarum** (Canada native)

#### Plants for under oak trees

Naturalized oaks typically have little more than clumping grasses growing under them due to their root structure and nutrition needs. Never plant anything closer than 10' from the trunk. They dislike having their roots and drainage situations changed. Select plants that need a minimum of care, will not compete for water, and have shallow root systems.

**Heuchera** (native to various regions including California and Mexico)

**California Fescue** (California/Oregon native in grasslands)

**Creeping sage** (California native)

#### Planting narrow strips

Take width into consideration: do not plant a 5' x 5' shrub in a strip 18" deep! Be sure to plant shrubs at least 4' from the house foundation.

**For dry/hot strips, consider xeric (drought-tolerant) plants. Google "xeric plants" and use [Wildflower.org](http://Wildflower.org) to find natives.**

**Hardy Geranium** (native)

**Many grasses**

**Lavender** (European/Mediterranean native)

**Echinops (Globe Thistle)** (central to eastern Europe native)

**Penstemon** (native to southern and eastern US, possibly only Mississippi basin)

**Artemisia** (North America native)

**For strips at the base of a hill or rise, consider plants that like moist conditions.**

**Purple-stem Angelica** (native)

**Siberian Iris** (Europe and central Asia native)

**Aruncus (Goat's Beard)** (native)

**Sedge** (native)

**Asclepias** (native)

**Chelone (Turtlehead)** (native)

**Hardy Hibiscus** (southern/eastern US native)

**Clethra** (native)

#### High-traffic areas

Consider a fast-growing groundcover, but remember that some are aggressive spreaders.

Some types of **creeping thyme**

**Clover** (great for bees!)

**Ajuga**

**Blue grama grass**

**Vinca (periwinkle)**

#### Alternative lawns

**Dwarf Fescue**

**Woolly thyme**

**Pink Chintz creeping thyme**

**Appalachian Sedge Grass**



## Do Your Flowers Get the Flop?

**By Ashley Rooney**

All dressed up and ready to meet the new fiancée, we spotted the 12 tomato cages left on the curb for the trash man. Certainly, we couldn't resist that curbside bounty! What a deal. We got caught in our trash picking by the happy couple as I put the ninth cage in the car. Very embarrassing.

In August, many gardeners will be cursing their leaning, dangling dahlias, asters, Joe Pye, hollyhocks etc. My words to the wise are: Don't let your plants get the flop.

Some gardeners insist that staking is inappropriate in the informal garden. Others say plants look and grow better when staked — no matter the garden.

I believe that some plants really require staking. Tall and medium-sized plants with heavy, large flowers don't look so great when the winds and rains come. Perennials lean, topple, and flop for a variety of reasons. Sometimes an otherwise sturdy stem tumbles when a summer thunderstorm conspires with weighty blooms to bend stems to the ground. In other cases, stems grow lush and weak because of over-fertilizing.

Generally, the more formal the garden, the more you will require staking. You also may need to stake plants if your garden is in a windy spot, or where there is heavy rainfall. But there is no set rule for staking. If a plant looks like it will fall over or break, then stake!

If plants need staking, they should be staked when they're young. You can purchase pre-made stakes or even use branches. We like bamboo. As the plants grow, they will cover up much of the stake so it won't be visible.

What is important is that you select a sturdy stake. If not, your plant could still end up on the ground.

### Single Stakes

We grew hyacinths indoors. As the flower blossomed, the plant dragged on the table. It needed a stake.

Individual staking works well with plants with large heavy flowers, such as hyacinths, dahlias, amaryllis, lilies or snapdragons. Use 1 inch.thick wooden stakes, which are often available in bundles of several stakes. Apply single stakes before flower buds are well formed and opened. The stakes and ties will be hidden once the new foliage starts to grow.

When buying single stakes for your outside plants, plan on having at least 12 inches below the ground in addition to the height needed above the ground.

When staking plants, make sure you use materials with some "give." Green garden twine or "twist-ems" are great for attaching plants to stakes. Elastic garden or garbage ties also add extra support.

### Multi-Stakes

Peter came home the other day with an armful of 6-foot long, 3/4-inch molding — a perfect solution for my tall fall asters. Vigorous growing plants need sturdy stakes.

Another natural-looking alternative would be to surround dense leafy perennials, such as asters, with four or more stakes set about eight inches apart. Connect the stakes with twine in a star pattern just as the flower buds begin to show color.

You also could visit your local garden center to see what they have available in the way of plastic and metal rings. Bushy perennials such as peonies with large, heavy flowers like those

circular metal frames. The foliage grows and fills in to conceal the support, but you need to install that ring early on.

Linking metal stakes come in a variety of sizes, penetrate the soil easily, and last from season to season. Metal linking stakes may not work if your lazy plant is a tall one.

### When to Stake

Timing is critical in staking. Do it early, just as soon as the new stems appear.

Plants that need staking include: aster, balloon flower, boltonia, delphinium, foxglove, goldenrod, helenium, peony.



### Jokes to get you through the heat!

How much room do fungi need to grow?

As mushroom as possible.

What did the farmer say to the cows at night?

It's pasture bedtime!

My horse has insomnia and keeps everyone awake.

She's a nightmare.

I wanted to start a garden, but....

I haven't botany plants yet!



### Meet our new Membership Co-Chairs!

#### Susan Cass



Having retired early from MIT last July (I'm a Quarter Century Club member), I've been able to jump into more Garden Club activities. Besides being on the Membership Committee and in the Monday night sub-group, I headed up the mentoring program, participated in community gardening events, and helped with potting for the plant sale. As avid novice gardener, in pre-pandemic times I would attend monthly meetings with a notebook to jot down ideas. I'm always looking for plants that thrive in wet conditions, so if you have any success stories, please share them with me.

#### Marlene Stone



I have recently retired from an over 35 year career in Human Resources. Since joining the Garden Club in the past few years, I have served as the treasurer for the Morning Study Group and as a program co-chair for the Monday evening group. I have enjoyed being part of the membership committee for the last two years and served as a potting co-chair for the Plant Sale. I have also learned a lot helping in a number of community gardens, and have spent many hours in my own garden, adding new plants from the plant sale. I look forward to serving the club as a membership committee co-chair with **Susan Cass**.



## A Great Opportunity!

The Ecological Landscape Alliance (ELA) is hosting an Advanced Design Workshop by Patrick Cullina on Wednesday, August 5th, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM.

Patrick is a rock star in the garden design world. He is the former Vice President of Horticulture and Park Operations for New York City's High Line as well as Brooklyn Botanical Gardens.

The class is online and offers a chance for everyone to learn from this world-class expert.

Here is the link.

<https://www.ecolandscaping.org/event/advanced-design-workshop-with-patrick-cullina-8-5>



## Help Wanted and very much needed...

Recently, the LFGC received this request from a Lexington resident. If anyone is interested, respond to the name below as soon as possible. Thank you.

This is a confidential inquiry. I'm writing to see if the Field and Garden Club might have any members who would be willing to donate some gardening time for a Lexington family in need. The family is very private and has requested that I protect their confidentiality, given the tragic circumstances, so I'd rather not share their name in this email (in case it is circulated).

This family went on a lengthy trip, during which the father had an accident and was paralyzed. Upon their return, he faced many months in the hospital, as medical issues were their top priority. Yard work was not, and their medical expenses have been staggering.

I'm a family friend and have been helping them with the house and outdoors. This past weekend I spent 5 hours raking and weeding their front yard and I didn't make a dent in the work. Plus, I realized I don't have the gardening skills to properly prune the vegetation. I need help.

So I thought I might reach out to your group and see if any fellow Lexingtonians might be willing, out of the goodness of their hearts, to spare some time to help out this family and help rake, weed and trim their yard with me. This family really needs some random acts of kindness in their life.

If anyone can help, they can contact me.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Leigh-Ann Durant**

31 Baskin Road



## What are you reading?

### Members share some of the books they're enjoying this summer.....

#### Linda Lindell

I am reading a nonfiction book called *Born Finn* by Elsie Herranen Kovac. All my ancestors came from Finland on ships from 1900 to 1920. I can relate to the lifestyle and the names are so like my own family. The examples of the renowned Finnish hospitality sound familiar.... Coffee and handmade Nisu... Finnish Coffee bread with cardamom seeds... all bring back memories. My mother would bake this bread on Fridays and I keep the traditional baking going by giving this delicious bread to family and friends.

#### Regina Sutton

I am currently reading Tracy Kidder's novel *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. The central character is Paul Farmer, a renowned infectious disease specialist and co-founder of Partners in Health. "At the heart of the book is the example of life based on hope, and on an understanding of the truth of the Haitian proverb — beyond mountains there are mountains: as you solve one problem, another problem presents itself, and so you go on and try to solve that one too. Farmer wants to change the world and this book will change the way you see it." It is certainly worth the read!

#### Barbara Mix

I've just read *Victory Garden* by Rhys Bowen and recommended by Elaine Doran. Set in England during WWI, 21 year old Emily finds an unkempt herb garden and sets about restoring it and learning about medicinal and aromatic herbs, as well as culinary herbs and how to concoct teas and other uses...just like the herb garden at Hancock/Clarke House! A good read. Also by same author, *In Farleigh Field*, about WWII code breakers, and *The Tuscan Child*, historical fiction about WWII set in Tuscany.

#### Judy Minardi

I had planned a trip to Cornwall in southwest England for this summer. The trip will have to wait, but I have enjoyed reading some fiction and non-fiction books about the area. Daphne DuMaurier's 1938 gothic mystery novel, *Rebecca*, is set in a manor in Cornwall. It was an exciting read with interesting allusions to some of the different gardens on the estate.



If you've read a book you'd like to share with the membership, please email your description to **Ruthanne Igoe** by August 15th.

