



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

Happy Summer Everyone!

Many of you know that John and I recently moved to an old house in Concord that sits in the middle of about two acres of lawn, gardens, trees, shrubs, and...weeds! It seemed that every day this spring brought a new discovery of what was popping out of the ground or flowering in the trees and bushes; daffodils, periwinkle, violets of so many hues, lilacs....then came the iris, all kinds of roses, solomon's seal, lady's mantle, honeysuckle, lamb's ears, and peonies so bountiful, I just couldn't believe it! Those lovely, delicate flowers on long stems turned out to be celandine and garlic mustard! Who knew? Now the hollyhocks are about to bloom, and I run out every morning to see how they're doing. Being surrounded by so much beauty is soothing to the soul during these difficult times. I'm sure many of you are feeling the same way.

So, many thanks to the woman who previously tended and cared for this oasis of bliss. I hope I can do her proud, learn about what's here, and keep it all healthy and alive! I have made great use of a wonderful app on my phone called "Picture This" to help me identify many plants. I've been looking through my collection of gardening books and have pulled out many pages of notes I took from our big club lectures to help me get started in this new adventure. I have gone back to reread the horticultural information found in our monthly newsletters. So many wonderful reasons I'm very happy to belong to the Lexington Field and Garden Club!

I hope that in the near future we can gather again, face to face, and enjoy each other's company. I can't wait for you all to come visit me in Concord....any advice, hints, and warnings will be much appreciated! Bridget Galdes and I continue to monitor the official government guidelines and will keep you posted about what lies ahead for the LFGC. In the meantime, I wish you a happy, healthy, and safe summer, spending as much time in your own personal oases as possible!

Take care and stay well,

Ruthanne Igoe

Co-President



Horticultural Happenings



Wondering how to incorporate native plant areas into your suburban landscape and not have it look too wild and crazy? Start with careful plant selection. In this stylized “meadow,” now in its second year, **Holly Samuels’** selection criteria included plants under 4' that could take full sun, withstand a voracious rabbit population, and be attractive to people and pollinators. Then she made a legible design, which is surrounded by something obviously cared for such as a lawn, patio, or path. Nature amidst human habitation! Drive by at 39 Bow St and watch it develop.



Help Wanted!

We're still looking for someone to volunteer to be a liaison between the LFGC and the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts (GCFM). Taking on this role would be a great service to the club as it would keep us all informed and up-to-date on the wonderful events and services the GCFM offers. Please contact **Ruthanne Igoe** or **Bridget Galdes** for more information.



David Williams would like some help in his garden. Contact him if you'd like to lend a helping hand.

Hartwell Green Space

The green space at Hartwell designed by **Betsey Weiss** is doing quite well.



Remember...

to use the discount card on the back of the Yearbook when shopping for plants this summer! Establishments that give LFGC members a discount are listed on the back page.

Jokes for those who garden...

I want to tell you about a girl who only eats plants.
You've probably never heard of herbivore.



I woke up this morning and found that someone had dumped a bunch of celery on my front porch.

I think I'm being stalked.



Upcoming Lexington Field & Garden Summer Series

July – August 2020

Sign up for these virtual programs at <https://www.caryllibrary.org/calendar/program-calendar>

Click on the title of the program to sign up. You can view YouTubes of past programs through the library website.

July 1 Wonderful Hanging Baskets



Hanging baskets can turn just about any nook or cranny into an inviting retreat. **Ashley Rooney** and lifelong gardener/designer **Elaine Doran** will demonstrate how to make a hanging basket and discuss good floral candidates.

July 8 Fairy Gardens



Fairy houses are a major attraction today as we turn back to nature. Join us on a journey of “once upon a time” fairy homes and gardens. **Ashley Rooney** and Barbara Purchia, writer and stained-glass artist, investigated and wrote *Fairy Homes and Gardens*. Have your children join you for this presentation!

July 15 Composting and Rainwater Harvesting with Donna Moultrup and Ashley Rooney

Building and maintaining a compost pile is the surest, easiest way to become a better gardener. You’ll be producing food for your garden as leaves, eggshells, orange rinds, and grass clippings become transformed into rich compost. You also can conserve your rain water and cut down on your water bill with a rainwater barrel.



July 22 Gardening In Difficult Spots



Ashley Rooney and **Karen Droisen**, a lifelong gardener, will discuss possible solutions to your problems. Please send your questions/jpegs in ahead of time to caryprograms@minlib.net

July 29 Beekeeping 101

Honey bees are the most important pollinators for gardens and agriculture. **Alexandra Bartsch** (Lexington Bee Company) works the LHS (MA) High School Bee Club to promote and provide bees free to Lexington's public gardens, orchards, and conservation lands. She and **Ashley Rooney** will discuss beekeeping in the suburbs.



August 5 The Monarch Gardener

Everyone knows what a Monarch butterfly looks like, but what about the Monarch caterpillar? **Leslie Masson**, butterfly aficionado, and **Ashley Rooney** will tell us about the Monarch's life in the garden and about other insects as well.



August 12 Gardening for All Seasons



Designing year-round gardens ensures that your home is surrounded by color and interest. **Georgia Harris**, a gifted Master Gardener, and **Ashley Rooney** will describe how to create a four-season garden.



A Pandemic Project

What can we do to make months of quarantine worthwhile? Bake bread, write a blog, plant a new garden.

On March 21, **Ashley Rooney** received this note:

Hi Ashley,

Given that we are desperate for activities, but the four of us are stuck at home, we are thinking of buying excellent vegetable deck planters to grow tomatoes, etc. outside on our south/west facing deck which get lots of sun from morning until 4 PM.

We have a deck planter irrigation system already, so we can stick little irrigation hoses into the planters all along the exterior edge of the deck, which is 60 feet long! Which deck vegetable planters, with drainage would you recommend we purchase? Either plastic or perhaps more attractive wood with a lining and drainage?

Hope you are well.

Michael & Yvette

On June 6, I received these pictures of three raised garden boxes designed by **Yvette Beeman**, from several ideas gleaned from the internet. Michael went on to say, "A good friend who's a carpentry wiz, assembled the materials required and built all three boxes with our 2 college age sons, in 2 days (best wood to use is cedar — we used 4X4 legs and provide for plenty of drainage holes in the bottom which we lined with thick gauged metal mesh). After staining the boxes inside and outside, we are lining/stapling the inside of each

box with dark plastic and then garden mesh which will have holes in the bottom for drainage. Tomorrow, we will fill the boxes with Espoma Organic Potting Soil from Wagon Wheel and plant a variety of vegetables."



Your Kitchen Cupboard and Your Garden

E. Ashley Rooney

For years, I have been putting coffee grounds on my rhododendrons and banana peels on my roses. They have been very happy. Now, according to the Internet, I discover that I can do even more. Of course, all these products can just go into my compost pile, too!

Tea leaves. Roses love the tannic acid that naturally occurs in tea leaves. Used tea grounds contain nutrients and tannic acid that, when added to the soil, create a more fertile environment for plants. Because tea grounds are natural organic matter, they increase nutrient levels and improve soil quality as they decompose. Sprinkle your used tea leaves around the base of acid-loving plants, including your tomatoes and roses, and gently scratch them in.

Coffee Grounds. To fertilize your acid-loving plants such as azaleas, hydrangeas, and lilies, add coffee grounds directly to the soil in your garden. You can scratch it into the top couple inches of soil or just sprinkle the grounds on top and leave it alone.

You can also make coffee ground “tea.” Add 2 cups of used coffee grounds to a 5-gallon bucket of water. Let the “tea” steep for a few hours or overnight. You can use this concoction as a liquid fertilizer for garden and container plants. It also makes a great foliar feed you can spray directly on the leaves and stems of your plants.

Sprinkling grounds around plants (and on top of soil) is thought to help deter some pests such as cats, rabbits and slugs from the plants. This is thought to be due to the caffeine content.

If your soil is already high in nitrogen, I wouldn't use the coffee grounds because the extra boost from coffee grounds could stunt the growth of your plants.

Eggshells. Another way to protect your plants against pests is using eggshells. Coarsely crumbled, eggshells form an effective barrier against soft-bodied garden pests like snails and slugs that eat your plants.

An excellent source of calcium, eggshells act to strengthen the walls of plants' cells and help them in resisting the entry of pathogens. Besides promoting plant vigor in general, calcium maintains healthy foliage in rose plants, and strengthens their root systems as well, allowing them to uptake more nutrients from the soil. Crush a few eggshells and put them around the base of your rose plants, or add them before planting.

Bananas. At 42% potassium, banana peels are one of the highest organic potassium sources. They do not contain nitrogen, which makes using this fertilizer for tomatoes and peppers a perfect choice because they both have a low nitrogen need.

Roses love potassium, and banana skins consist of this mineral. And since they decompose easily, they rapidly release valuable minerals such as sulfur, calcium, potassium, magnesium, as well as trace elements into the soil. You can chop the peels, and then add to your garden's soil directly. Toss leftover banana peels into a compost pile. Dry the peels then grind them into a fertilizer.

The lack of a compost pile shouldn't deter you from feeding your garden your own organic fertilizer; simply drop some banana peels into a bucket filled with water and let it stay put for a few days. You will get a mineral-rich banana tea that will enrich your flower and vegetable beds with nutrients and promote vigorous growth.

Vegetable Cooking Water. Instead of dumping out your vegetable water, use it to fertilize your roses and other garden plants. Note: do not add salt to the water; salt is harmful to plants – and obviously let the water cool.

Epsom Salt. Use Epsom salt when you transplant your plants to save them from transplant shock. When planting seedlings or new plants, dig a hole and place about 1 tablespoon of Epsom salt in the bottom of the hole and cover with a thin layer of dirt, place the plant in the hole and finish planting.



What Are You Reading?

Summer time brings lazy days for curling up and enjoying some leisurely reading! Here are some titles members are enjoying...

Ruthanne Igoe

I'm reading Gladys Taber's *The Stillwater Road* that chronicles in monthly essays her adventurous move in 1931 from New York City to an old, ramshackle farm in rural Connecticut. The many obstacles, repairs, surprises, and hardships she, her family, and co-owner friends encounter make for a wonderful and nostalgic read.

I've also just started *Sunflowers ... A Novel of Vincent Van Gogh* by Sheramy Bundrick. This is an imagined tale of the relationship between the passionate and erratic artist and the young prostitute with whom he forms a deep attachment in the last years of his life.

Anne Lee

I just read *Lab Girl*, a memoir by scientist and professor Hope Jahren. Navigating personal and professional challenges including bipolar disorder, meager budgets, and sexist work environments, Jahren and her wildly eccentric lab manager, Bill, learn a lot about themselves, each other, and the mysterious lives of plants. This is a fascinating look at a woman of science; a moving portrait of a longtime friendship; and a fresh look at the natural world.

Bridget Galdes

Taylor's *50 Best Perennials for Shade* is a book I've read from cover to cover many times over, and it has accompanied me on my trips to the garden centers. Since I have mostly shade in my garden, it has helped me go beyond hostas and astilbe. I've planted a couple new interesting specimens since I've read this book, and have been enjoying them ever since!

The Late Show by Michael Connelly is the first of a series of three Renee Ballard detective books. It's about how Renee solved a couple of crimes in spite of the fact that it was not her responsibility to do so since she was demoted to night duty because she filed a sexual harassment complaint against a supervisor. Besides the riveting story line, it was great to read how she thrived as a woman when all odds were against her. Go "Me Too"! Now I'm on the second of the series — *Dark Sacred Night* — but that story is for another day — or should I say — night?

Donna Dennison

I'm currently reading *Badlands* by Jonathan Rabin, a history of the settling of the west, mostly Montana and, I think, North Dakota. (I haven't read very far yet!) The writing is captivating and lyrical, more like fiction than dry history. Bridget's recommendation of *The Late Show* is next on my reading list. I like books with strong female leads.

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

