



Summer 2016

# Can You Dig It?

The “dog-days of summer” have certainly been felt these past few weeks...hot, humid, and an occasional thunderstorm. The ground around my house, white clay, feels like cement...my gardens and pots all seem to be needing water every day. Many of us are looking forward to fall – the changing leaves, cooler days and sweater nights... the golden tones in our gardens...a delightful time of year!

So we are offering you with this issue of “**Can You Dig It**” a way to beat the heat, to think ahead, to enjoy the flowers that are blooming still, to appreciate nature in all its glory...so read on, and enjoy.

**Trish,** Editor

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Are You Sweltering in Your Garden* .....Christie Hamilton
- From the Potting Shed*.....Sherry Burke
- Summertime and the Living is Easy* .....Kim Eckert
- The Fall Vegetable Garden*.....Chloe Pitard
- Mowing Meadows*.....Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
- Help! Fall Clean-up Tasks* .....Trish Reynolds
- Garden, Shore and Roadside*.....Jane Anderson
- Pops of Color for Late Summer, Early Fall* .....Samantha McCall
- Travels with Mary*.....Mary Holston

Editor.....Trish Reynolds

Design & Layout.....Rebecca Gaffney



Photo by Karen Garofalo. Red Bluff Home Gardens

*"The collision of hail or rain with hard surfaces, or the song of cicadas in a summer field. These sonic events are made out of thousands of isolated sounds; this multitude of sounds, seen as totality, is a new sonic event."*

*Iannis Xenakis*



## Are You Sweltering in Your Garden?

\* Christie Hamilton

ARE YOU SWELTERING IN YOUR GARDEN??? Well then, it's time to come inside and order your...SPRING BULBS!

Now is the best time to order spring bulbs from catalogs or on-line retailers. Soon our local sources will have bulbs, but if you have your heart set on a certain bulb or color...GET TO IT! There are many bulb catalogs, but I often order from **Brent and Becky** and **John Sheepers**.

Everyone knows that daffodils in our area are the surest, most reliable spring bulb show...Because pests don't eat the bulbs or the flowers, and their requirements for reappearing and increasing year after year seem to be met by Mother Nature herself. For these reasons, each year I add some new daffodil to my bulb order.

There are not a lot of bulb planting "rules." The main one is fairly easy to remember and uncompromising: **THEY MUST GET BELOW THE GROUND, BEFORE THE GROUND FREEZES!** Even the bulbous alliums need to be planted in the fall, for a bloom time in June. Most bulbs are tolerant of less than ideal positioning (right side up). A bulb planted upside down **WILL** grow toward the light and sprout!

After years of digging a requisite 5-6-7 inch hole and planting one bulb at a time, OR excavating a 20 inch round, such planting hole in which to carefully place 10 bulbs (right side up :->) and cover with soil, I have learned how quickly two people can plant 100s of daffodil bulbs: One steps on a spade pushing it about 6" into the ground, pulls back, and another slips a bulb in behind the spade as spade is pulled out...a careful step over that dirt (or grass) and it's done! **IT WORKS!** With a trowel, I can do small bulbs this way without help.

If I did not already have these six kinds of bulbs, I would not be able to recommend them so highly, and this would be my **spring bulb order for 2017:**

**GLOBEMASTER GIANT ALLIUM.** This may be the largest bloom on very strong stems. Who could not want these spectacular beauties?

**GALANTHUS** (Snow Drops). This is one of the small "lesser" bulbs...for sweet, "up close" viewing (a very early spring harbinger of spring...best in a woodland garden that gets sun in winter and dapples to shade in the summer).

**MUSCARI** (Grape Hyacinth). Another small bulb in shades of blue or pink or white. Plant these where they can spread...sun or part shade.

**SCILLA HYACINTHOIDES HISIPANICA.** Is it any wonder that we call these



Spanish Squill, or Wood Hyacinth, or Spanish Bluebell?? I can never have enough of these blue bells (also come in pink and white). About 12 inches high.



**CHIONODOXA FORBESII GIANT** (Glory of the Snow). I order these from Sheepers. They are another "lesser" bulb, causing this girl who does love blue spring flowers much joy. They have been called "lawn stars" as they can be planted in the grass for an ever-expanding spring show, (OH MY!!!) and withering enough so that they can be mowed at first mowing.



**LYCORIS RADIATA** (Red Spider Lilies). These are "Naked Ladies" which emerge in the spring with green foliage, only to die back and bloom in September. Surprise!

**Green Wave Parrot Tulip.** I fell in love with this tulip last spring when Kathy Gilson brought an arrangement from her gardens. ♪

**HOLIDAY ALERT:** As you order your bulbs, these can be **THE BEST** Christmas presents for gardening friends (in our zone or higher). In recent years here the ground has **NOT** frozen before Christmas (perhaps an "early" holiday present!).

## From the Potting Shed

\* Sherry Burke

“The Experiment” – The four raised gardens behind our potting shed were a source of extra delight this past year. Usually used to raise seasonal herbs and vegetables, this spring the gardens brought on an avalanche of tulips for cutting.

Here is how the project, which my family called “*The Experiment*,” happened. In September of 2015 I was routinely cleaning up the potting shed and glancing out the window at the raised beds. Two of the gardens were in use for fall lettuces, kale, spinach and a late crop of radishes. A few tomato plants hung on. But the other two 12’ by 4’ raised beds were now empty—their green beans, zucchini, onions and cucumbers harvested a week ago. In a normal year these beds would take a winter’s nap until time for spring planting the following March.

How could this space be used over the winter?

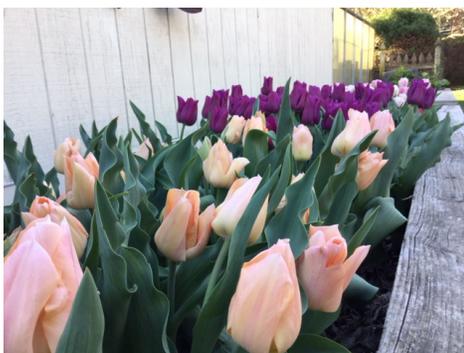
Well, the bulb catalogues (mentioned above by Christie) that were arriving held the answer – TULIPS! Any homeowner with deer nearby will say they cannot grow tulips because the deer (rabbits and squirrels, too) will eat them. But these raised gardens have a deer-proof picket fence around them! Perhaps a crop of

tulips would work, and I would have some early cutting flowers to enjoy and to share.

I chose 300 tulips of varying colors and types for my first year’s experiment: Triumph tulips, which have tall, strong stems in colors *Apricot Beauty* and *Passionale* (purple). Also a Darwin Hybrid tulip called *Design Impression*, which is a painterly pink tulip with muted golden and green streaks, its foliage a deep green edged in lime yellow. The fourth variety was a double tulip called *Angelique*, which is a favorite of tulip lovers.

The bulbs arrived in October and I planted them in two raised beds, about 8” deep with a spoon full of bone meal to nourish each one. The next day several of the bulbs had been dug up by the squirrels! Yikes! These gardens may be deer proof but not squirrel proof. I quickly used Google to find a solution to thwart the squirrels. The suggestion was to pile dry leaves on the gardens. There are leaves aplenty in October, so no problem – done!

Was the experiment successful? Wow and double wow! The tulips loved the raised beds, strutting their stuff as some might say. Bouquets graced our house and those of friends, and there were smiles all around over the early spring – surprise in the vegetable garden behind the Potting Shed.☺



### Editor’s Note:

Just in case you’re not quite ready to think of spring 2017, here are some ideas for late summer-fall 2016!

## Summertime and the Living is Easy

\* Kim Eckert

“*Summertime and the living is easy.*” These famous lyrics by George Gershwin sound appropriate now. But, as you enjoy the last days of summer, you realize the excessive heat and humidity have taken a toll on your gardens—mine, too. Don’t despair. Grab a cup of coffee or a cool iced tea and take a morning stroll through your garden—a stroll with a purpose. I’m going to share three simple things you can do now to minimize the summer doldrums in your garden next year. Grab your beverage, a pad of paper and a pen. Let’s get started.

The first step is to collect information. View yourself as an objective critic and categorize your plants by performance into three groups: Excellent, good and poor. Then, subdivide the “poor” category into two groups: “relocate/replace” and “discard.” Each plant should be analyzed based on its beauty (flower, color, texture), maintenance requirements, pest and

disease resistance and how well it has prospered in its environment. To my surprise, I had twenty-seven “excellent,” five “good,” and five “poor.” The analysis alone helped to alleviate some of the doldrums.

Now that you have categorized and analyzed your garden, you can move on to the second step—taking action based on your evaluations.

The plants in the “excellent” category are fine and don’t require any change to

### EXCELLENT



Rudbeckia—hirta



Anemone tomentosa  
‘Robustissima’

their current situation. The plants in the “good” category require the most thought. What can you do to make them “excellent”? Is it their location, watering, maintenance, pests, disease or all of the above?

Most of my phlox falls into the good category. The blooms are fabulous, but the foliage is not. Perhaps it is the over-whelmingly muggy weather this year. Maybe it is the cultivar. For example, *Phlox paniculata* ‘David’ performed better than the rest, which include ‘Laura’ and ‘Flam,’ with regard to mildew. *Phlox paniculata* ‘David’s Lavender’ is similar in color and may be a better option next year. I will add that to my list of purchases in the spring of 2017.



In the “poor” category, decide if the plants are worth keeping and relocating or just removing them altogether. Your decision will likely be based on why they are such underperformers. Every *Chelone glabra* and Cinnamon fern in every one of my gardens is weak or gone.

I won’t replace those that died with similar cultivars and will likely take out the ones that are left. Their replacements will likely be plants in the “excellent” category. Relocating “poor” performers requires analyzing why they did not thrive in their current location. In my case, we had a tree removed and several azaleas found themselves in full sun. I will simply move them to a shadier site.

Finally, in your tour you may have seen areas in your garden where plants naturally fade by summer’s end. You can augment planting in those areas with annuals, fall flowers and bulbs. Make a note of where those areas exist and plan to combine or under plant your shrubs and perennials as needed. Plants that do well with companion planting are *astilbe*, *cimicifuga*, and *hellebores*, to name a few. For immediate results, a fresh layer of mulch always improves a garden’s appearance.

Your garden tour can provide you with a fresh new perspective. In my case, I was surprised by how well the gardens were handling the weather. By all accounts, better than me! This (stroll with a purpose) definitely took the sting out of the summer doldrums, but I am still looking forward to the cooler days in the fall and those gorgeous crisp clear nights. ☺

## The Fall Vegetable Garden

### \* Chloe Pitard (photos courtesy of Sherry Burke)

Nothing beats having your own vegetable plot. You can have the freshest produce in season, and you only pick what you need each day. Such pleasure need not stop as summer ends. In the fall you can grow the cool weather crops in the vegetable garden again, and they can last nearly to the end of the year. All the cabbage family and salad greens will thrive in addition to things like radishes and dill. Fall vegetable gardening done with care is easily as successful or more so than spring gardening. **The key to success with fall vegetables is to plant early, about August 1, and to keep things evenly moist, especially during the hot months of August and September.**

As the days get shorter in the fall, things will grow more slowly, and at a certain stage almost stop. They don’t die, but they will not progress. If you plant early enough to give vegetables time to get picking size, the result is that you can harvest these mature crops for a long time, and they will not bolt. Slowing growth in the fall is mostly because of shorter days, not the cooler temperatures. **Because of the shortening days you want to get things close to harvest size by about October 15.**

The first frost in Talbot County is usually sometime between October 15 and 30. Killing frost may not come until close to Thanksgiving. Most fall crops can take a light frost. I can often pick salad for Thanksgiving dinner.

To keep crops available even longer, you can build an enclosure for protection. Use lengths of narrow PVC pipe to make hoops and opaque plastic sheeting for an enclosure to make an easy, inexpensive



temporary mini-greenhouse. It will provide protection almost all winter for your salad greens. Things in this greenhouse will grow very slowly, but if they are mature, they will be good for picking almost all winter.

**What to grow:** All the cabbage family crops and salad greens grow well in the fall. I usually purchase plants of broccoli, kale



and spinach at the Easton Farmers’ Market as soon as they are available. This is usually late August, but they are fairly well along by then. Broccoli often will peter out late fall but then pick up again in the spring. Spinach will often last all winter with protection, just be sure to plant enough to last. I harvest it often for salads. I plant seeds of turnips, radishes and all the salad greens as close to August first as possible. Lettuce, mesclun, arugula,



tatsoi and vit/mache all do well in the fall. If I get started late I will purchase some of these in plants, too. Water the soil the day before if possible. I cover the newly planted seeds with floating row cover until things are well up, usually a couple of weeks. This provides

protection from the hot sun, animals, insects and wind and keeps the seedlings evenly moist. I use a small amount of low nitrogen fertilizer once things are well up, and I water often.

Fall gardening extends the season of delicious fresh home grown vegetables by many months. Once you try it, you will not go back to closing up the vegetable shop at the end of summer. ☺

## Mowing Meadows

\* Printed with permission from Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage



There are thousands of acres of herbaceous meadow habitat in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in Maryland. The Farm Service Agency allows ALL of this land to be mowed starting August 15 of each summer with the justification that “nesting season is over.” This is not true as MANY pollinator species remain active and need the plants in these meadows to stay intact through October to produce successfully. For example, some of our threatened Monarch butterflies are still in the caterpillar stage on the milkweeds in these meadows (see picture) and will be killed by the late summer mowing. There are diverse goldenrods, tickseed sunflowers, and other plants that would bloom through October if they were not mowed. These flowers would provide food for migrating monarchs and other pollinators such as bumblebees.

Wildlife need the food and cover that unmown meadows provide to survive the winter. Bobwhite quail have vanished in almost all of Maryland due to clean farming practices like fall mowing. Note that when these CREP lands are chopped to lawn height in August this ground has little value to wildlife for over seven months of the year! Please don't cut anything other than trails in your meadows until March—and consider mowing 20-50% of your herbaceous land then in order to leave lots of early nesting season cover for wildlife.



Monarch butterfly on tickseed—a later fall/summer bloomer



Native bee on Black-eyed Susan

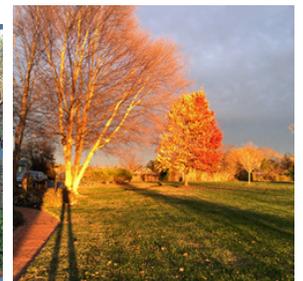
If you have questions, please call CWH at 410-822-5100.

## Help: Fall Clean-up Tasks

\* Trish Reynolds

Help is right! Fall, just around the corner, is a time to clean up our garden before we put it to bed for the winter...Here are a few tasks to consider as we get closer to fall:

- August is a great time to thin your iris – many of our iris that have been giving us beautiful blooms in the spring for years need to be thinned and maybe shared with our friends.
- August should be the last month to trim back your knock-out roses, as well as other types you might have in your garden. If you do it now you should get another bloom before late fall and it will give your plants a chance to harden off.
- Pull out those annuals that are finished, but before you do, try saving some of their seeds...we did an article in a previous issue...see that for hints on saving seeds!
- If you want to cut back those unsightly perennials, be mindful of those that have seeds that the birds will enjoy and maybe leave those for your winter visitors—Black eyed Susan, cone flowers—to name but two.
- Be sure to dig those tender bulbs before the first freezes, store them in your garage for next year's planting – think canna, dahlia, elephant ears, etc.
- If you have moved some of your house plants outside for a summer vacation, start looking at them now. You want to spray for bugs (think organic or horticulture oil), maybe you will need to repot, and clean the leaves with a damp cloth.
- Be sure to compost those fall leaves, twigs, etc...but before you do, get rid of any that are diseased...you don't want any of those in your compost as many diseases live through the winter.☺



## Garden, Shore & Roadside—Found Treasures for Fall Design

\* Jane Anderson

In Autumn decorating treasures are all around us. Vines, pods and wonderful weeds will be here for harvesting. A walk on the shoreline or creek bed can yield a beautiful chunk of driftwood with cavities for tucking in tiny plants or a bit of oasis for flowers. Scatter a handful of stones or shells with colorful leaves or sheet moss around it and you can have an interesting centerpiece.

A stroll down a country road, clippers in hand, offers cattails, swamp grasses, and deep rusty colored curly dock. Cattails in a generous bunch look dramatic plunked into a big urn or jar by the front door or in the foyer.



Be bold. Vines can create a good rustic structural support for floral arrangements. Spread dry and twisted grape or honeysuckle vines across a mantle or along a buffet, add leaves and berries and candles or small pottery jars of earthy flowers. If you're lucky you'll find bittersweet or Osage orange balls along your route. An ingenious friend of mine strung twinkle lights and bittersweet vines all over the ceiling of her old whitewashed screen porch and started her dinner parties there all fall. It was charming.

For taller profiles in your designs look for curly dock, sorghum (Milo) seed heads, wheat, and cardoon along with big bunches of curly willow branches and even dried gladiola leaves with their sturdy sword-like shape. For pods look for trumpet vine (great au naturel or sprayed gold or silver for glitz), milkweed, or even hibiscus flower bracts. Even bull thistles and cryptomaria cone clusters can be interesting.

### Texture is the name of the game in Autumn.

NOTE: Always spray anything with seeds or pods with a polyurethane spray to prevent inconvenient poofing and seed explosion messes. Do this outside before you bring them in for arranging.

Natural containers like pumpkins, squash and gourds or hollow stumps are fine vases. Because fall decor is naturally more rustic, junk stores, farm sales and your own garage or shed may be a good source. Old wooden boxes, galvanized buckets, watering cans, chicken feeders, weathered copper anything are all inspiring. You may have to set a glass jar or weighted plastic container inside to sustain the fresh flowers you wish to add. The same is true of baskets. A bushel basket bursting with curly willow branches and colorful leaves with pods and berries makes a friendly greeting. Add some



sunflowers and twinkle lights for a party boost.

So enjoy your free spirited bohemian side and grab your clippers for an early morning scavenger hunt along a country road as the geese begin to fly. ☺



### TREASURES ARE WAITING!

## Pops of Color for Late Summer Early Fall

\* Samantha McCall

I can't believe I'm about to admit this publicly, but for a long time I didn't like zinnias because of their bright intense Crayola-like colors.

For some reason, as an avid gardener and a floral designer, it seems sacrilege to not like a flower – any flower. That somehow such an admission would put an irreversible hex on my garden. Lucky for me my zinnia-bias was short-lived and I have come to appreciate their array of bright colors, different size flower heads and their sheer endurance in all sorts of hot, steamy, humid



*Zinnia tudor*



*Cactus type Zinnia*

Photos above courtesy of Sherry Burke

weather, when few other flowers dare to bloom. (Point of fact, as I write there is a heat index today of 112 degrees. Zinnias can handle it and still look beautiful. I cannot.)

So it is this time of year that I turn to zinnias as a work horse in many of my floral designs from now till when they stop blooming in late fall. That they are grown locally makes them even more appealing.

In the arrangement pictured here, I've included early blooming limelight hydrangeas, gladiolas, roses, mint, zinnias, dahlias, viburnum berries and clustered mountain mint\* in a 9-inch diameter urn. All of the flowers, I am happy to say, come from my garden with the exception of the gladiolas that I got at the

farmers' market and roses from the grocery store. With fall approaching, make the most of these seasonal blooms substituting similar shapes and colors as plant materials are available.

Here are the steps for making a similar design:

- Find a waterproof vessel you'd like to use. Cover the top of the vessel with chicken wire bending the pieces inward and then securing them with green floral tape to the rim. I always prefer designing in water, when possible, and the chicken wire makes an excellent, re-usable armature. Flowers tend to last much longer in water.
- Fill vessel with water.
- Angle four hydrangea blossoms inward along the edges in a criss-cross pattern, stems facing the center. Between them and the chicken wire, the armature is set. Make sure the stems are in the water or else they'll die prematurely.
- Place the gladiolas (I used five) in the center of the design, standing tall like soldiers, for height.
- Insert about 10 stems of purple-whirled mint above the hydrangeas and around the outer ring of the gladiolas to

create a framework for the colorful hotshots (dahlias, roses and zinnias) to be placed throughout the design. The mountain mint and viburnum berries help fill in a few holes making the design whole. ♪

\*Clustered mountain mint, also known as *Pycnanthemum muticum*, is a native species in our area and one of the best flowers for pollinators. It has a tendency to naturalize so be sure to plant it in an area where it's okay to travel. Unlike the straight species of mint, this native is much better behaved. It has a strong smell when picked, some say like pennyroyal, and has a long shelf life in a vase.



## Traveling with Mary

✿ Mary Holston

### The Nantucket Garden Club and Annual House and Garden Tour – August 2016

This month took us to Nantucket via our sailboat, *Fierce Pride*. We were very fortunate to have wonderfully cool and clear weather while there. The temperatures were in the high 80s during the day with cool breezes for the entire week. The evenings were in the high 60s to mid-70s. A great refuge from our temperatures in Oxford that week.

On, August 10<sup>th</sup>, I was able to attend the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual House and Garden Tour sponsored by The Nantucket Garden Club, Inc. The event is the major fundraiser for the organization founded in 1953 that works to promote better knowledge and love of gardening, plants, flowers and horticulture; contributes to the beauty of the island; and supports conservation initiatives that protect Nantucket's fragile and historic environment. Club president, Merriellou Symes, says that "wherever we spend our money it needs to be to the betterment of the community." A very similar goal of our own Talbot County Garden Club!

This year the event took place along Orange Street where I visited seven homes as well as the Nantucket Lightship Basket Museum. I want to tell you one very memorable story regarding the **Full Circle House**, located at 71 Orange Street.

Decades ago as a college student, the current owner of this home spent a summer working at various jobs on Nantucket. One of these was house cleaning. When she decided she wanted to buy a home in Nantucket several years ago, 71 Orange was on the market. As she toured this house, she had a strong sense of déjà vu. Then, she realized she had cleaned it while a college student. In 2014, she purchased the property, thus coming "full circle" – the name she chose for her new home: FULL CIRCLE.

The flower arrangements in each home were beautiful and added the color I thought each room needed! In particular, the containers, garden pots and window boxes were in tip top shape both at the featured homes as well as practically every house in the neighborhood. They were inspiring and beautifully maintained.

Most of the homes made extensive use of white hydrangeas, daylilies, hosta, white echinacea and boxwood as their plant palettes.



As I was admiring several of the arrangements, I spoke to one docent about our Talbot County Garden Club. She immediately asked if I knew Susan Pyles. I said yes, she is one of our members, an excellent teacher, floral designer, judge, and a very nice person and friend. The lady was a member of the Chevy Chase Garden Club, which is also in our Zone VI. She had many kind words to say about our Susan.

The gardens were lovely and beautiful. With the cool temperatures at night and the moderate temperatures in the daytime, the flowers were flourishing. I have included several pictures of the exterior of the homes and some of the lovely gardens (a few no-no inside pictures, too!).



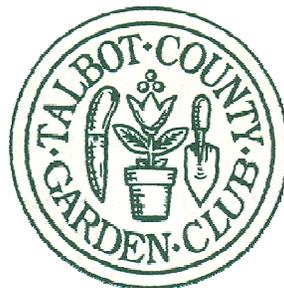
## NANTUCKET GARDENS!



If you have never been to Nantucket or it has been awhile since you last visited, please consider it for a summer side trip. The island is beautiful, the shopping great, the people friendly and the food wonderful. Looking forward to returning another summer.~

*Thanks to all our writers for this issue.....and to our, we hope, faithful readers.  
See you for a Holiday/Winter Issue, and enjoy the beauties of the FALL!!*

*Trish*



**TALBOT COUNTY GARDEN CLUB**  
P.O. Box 1524, Easton, MD 21601

Member of  
Garden Club of America  
National Garden Clubs, Inc., Central Atlantic Region  
The Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, District I