



Fall 2019

Can You Dig It?

Welcome once again to TCGC Horticulture Newsletter, *Can You Dig It*. Here we are at the close of our gardening year, and what a year it has beena wet cold winter, a wet cool spring, a wet June....and then a dry July, and drought until October...whew, what a ride. I think from a gardening perspective many of us will be glad to see this year end!

With this issue we are very pleased to announce that we will be combining forces on a more formal basis with the Conservation Committee, and adding article (s) on the important subject of our Environment to future issues. Lin Moeller will continue to provide these articles....thank you Lin.

So now we are covering Horticulture, Design with Samantha (but not in this issue), and Conservation....we hope you continue to enjoy CYDI and we encourage you to suggest topics that interest you and our Club.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all our contributors, past and present, for the ten years of sharing their love of all things gardening. And for 2019, a special thank you to the Horticulture Committee for their efforts in this newsletter and our workshops....Bobbie Brittingham, Kim Eckert, Rebecca Gaffney, Janet Mackey, Samantha McCall, Lin Moeller and Louise Williams.

In closing, we wish you a Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and a Safe, Healthy and Happy New Year....and we look forward to seeing you again in the Spring of 2020!

Trish Reynolds Editor

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Published by The Talbot County Garden Club

November often signals the end of our gardening year....the late summer asters and mums are finished, the leaves are off the trees, the winds are cool, almost cold....time to put our thoughts to Thanksgiving and Christmas....cooking, shopping and presents under the tree. Or is it?

One of my favorite, but often unpredictable flowers, is the Amaryllis. I have put last year's aside with the hope that I can bring them back for another yuletide visit and of course, I have purchased, dare I say, a few. The beautiful colors and magnificent flowers will lend themselves to brightening up any room as the days grow darker, the snow falls and the holidays are here!

Here are a few tips for success in growing Amaryllis (source – *The Gardener's Workshop*, Lisa Ziegler and my experience):

- Choose a decorative container that is just a bit larger than your bulb, as Amaryllis, I have found, like to be somewhat root bound.

- Speaking of roots – spread the roots apart a bit, and if using an older bulb clean off the dirt from the previous year, then soak the roots in “lukewarm water for a couple of hours” to encourage the roots to grow once they are in your container.

- One of the nice things about an Amaryllis is that they can be grown in a soil mix or in pebbles and water...I have tried both methods and like them equally. If you are using the soil planting method, be sure your container has a hole in the bottom as bulbs in general do not like wet feet. Next, fill your container with soil mix to about an inch or two (depending on the size of the container) from the rim....Place your bulb on top of the mix, adding some more soil mix to cover about ½ of the bulb. Add water but not so much that your bulb starts to “float” in the soil. I generally allow the soil to dry between watering until I start to see growth appear....then increase the watering. Place your container in a cool bright spot, rotating as the bulb starts to grow.

- One of the problems we have with growing Amaryllis is their vigorous growth often resulting in the stem and flower “tilting” or actually coming out of the pot and falling over. To avoid that we need to support the stem and resulting flowers.

Lisa Ziegler recommends providing “support for your bulb before you need it.”

- Using 3-4 twigs from your yard, diameter the size of your little finger, about 18” tall, create a natural looking support for your bulb to grow through.” Lisa pushes the twigs into the

soil around the bulb to lend support as it grows, or she creates a tri-pod or a teepee around the stem of the bulb as it grows to its full height.

- Once your flowers have finished blooming cut off the stem and the flower heads, letting the leaves continue to grow....continue watering. When the weather is warm, say May or June, move your container to a sheltered space where it will spend the summer.

Stages of Growth for an Amaryllis flower (below).



One of the unpredictable things about your Amaryllis is finding a bloom in the heat of the summer....the beautiful bloom of this Amaryllis (above right) was the result of pure neglect and nature intervening with a summer surprise....an Amaryllis blooming in July! 🍷🍷

Trees have been through a lot in our area in the last few years. As you drive throughout the Eastern Shore, you have probably noticed dead or dying oak trees, browning conifers and various other struggling trees. If you have a tree in your own landscape that is struggling, how do you make the decision whether to keep it or remove it? For each tree type, the reasons are different and knowing the causes can help with the decision.

The mighty oak has been put to the test in the last few years. Per Dr. Dave Clement at the University of Maryland Extension, several oak trees have been living in a weakened state due to old age, restricted root zones, soil compaction, trunk wounds, storm damage, poor pruning and opportunistic pests and diseases. Last season, these conditions were further worsened by the excessive rainfall that continued into this spring which resulted in standing water at many locations that had low spots, compacted soil, or water collection points. Flooded soils and saturated root zones further weakened trees by allowing root pathogens such as Phytophthora a chance to reduce the overall number of healthy roots. Dr. Clement further explains that oaks don't tolerate poorly drained soils. Trees can tolerate some reduction in root health, as long as temperatures remain cool, water demands aren't high, and adequate time is allowed for root regeneration. As a root system loses the ability to support the tree's water needs, dieback will occur especially in the upper branches. When the high summer temperatures began this season in mid-July and the low rainfall extended into this fall these conditions accelerated the loss of tree vigor and resulted in sudden browning of tree leaves and canopy dieback.

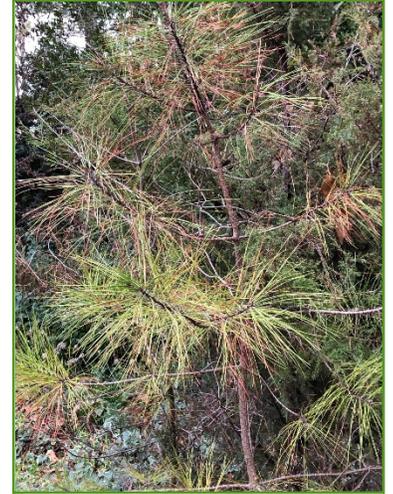


Arborvitae (Trish Reynolds)

year, the loss in late summer and early fall seemed excessive. Conifers were also negatively impacted by the heavy spring rains and the hot dry summer months.

Conifers have also seen an increased amount of browning, needle loss and dieback. Although it is normal for an evergreen to lose about one third of its foliage each

Several white pines were weakened as a result of sitting in water for too long which damaged their root systems. Once the heat of summer arrived, their damaged root systems were not sufficient enough to feed the tree. Some conifers died within months. Those that survived endured a very windy fall season and in their compromised state lost more than one third of their foliage. Most of these trees will likely rebound next year. Unless the tree is leaning or threatens your home or surrounding structures, it would be best to keep it.



White Pine (Trish Reynolds)

A broad category of trees to consider is the understory and/or ornamental group. The reasons for decline are varied but, the decision to keep the tree or remove it is quite precise. Several of these trees had dieback and leaf loss early, around mid-summer.

Now that the leaves have fallen this fall, how can you analyze its health? The best way is to take a sharp knife and gently scrape off a small piece of bark. If the exposed area just below the bark is not moist and green and the tree trunk is damaged, has mushrooms at the base or has twig dieback, the tree is dead and should be removed. If the area under the bark is green and moist, the tree is alive. Trees show signs of stress that, once identified can be treated successfully.

- Branch damage-Prune
- Splitting of the branches or trunk-Smaller splits will heal themselves. Larger ones may require an arborist's opinion.
- Mushrooms at the base of the tree-This is not always a bad sign. Identify the mushroom and learn if it may actually be beneficial to the tree.
- Early leaf drop and early color change- Usually a result of drought and heat. If the tree has buds, it is fine. Let its root system rejuvenate through winter and monitor the tree closely the next year.





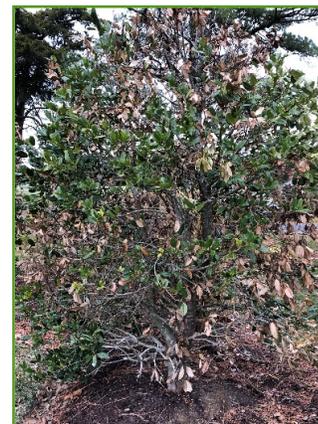
Photo- Kim Eckert

- Environmental leaf scorch-Tree roots are unable to keep up with the needs during heat and drought. Usually occurs in younger trees. The tree is very likely to rebound.

As you walk around your landscape, it is usually obvious which trees are dead or so damaged that they need to be removed. The last year has created some situations that make the choice less clear.

Trees have had to contend with excessive water followed by extreme heat during a drought. Many were unable to take up the nutrients required for a healthy growing season. Some seemed to have sacrificed leaf production and healthy foliage in order to save themselves for next year. Perhaps we can give them a chance to rebound over the winter and early spring. They may surprise us with their beauty in 2020. 🍂

Editor's Note: Will they, or won't they?



Hollies (Trish Reynolds)



Winter BirdingLouise Williams (with photos by Kathy Green, Somerset County Garden Club)

As I look out on this dreary rainy November day I have to ask myself – Where oh where was this rain when we needed it in July and August?? Our gardens have suffered and my own personal efforts here in Easton have been more than frustrating! But, fret not! Now is the time to watch bird migration take place. I have watched the herons, egrets, blue jays, robins, geese, cardinals and so many other beautiful birds take flight. They have passed over our region in droves. Warblers, chickadees, red winged blackbirds, woodpeckers, goldfinch, egrets, ospreys and an occasional bald eagle delight us.

A particular favorite on snowy days is the dark-eyed Junco. We have been graced with bluebirds this year and

have placed two new special birdhouses on the periphery of our property to attract them in February and March. There is so much to observe, enjoy and attract that I have forgotten (well, almost forgotten!) the state of my newly designed and less than fabulous perennial garden.

All you need to enjoy this fabulous fall and winter spectacle are binoculars, field guides and perhaps a telescope. Clean up your garden as best you can, then sit back and enjoy what this ecosystem of ours has to offer. Don't clean up too thoroughly though, as our feathered friends like and are attracted to piles of leaves which give them cover - under a woodpile and along fences! Certain bugs, mites, worms and the like all attract birds.

Keep in mind that birds are SO important to our ecological balance! So many shrubs, trees, flowers and vines can provide food for birds that consume seeds and fruits. Winterberry is a particular favorite with its bright red berries on bare branches. Cardinal flowers attract hummingbirds, zinnias and esclepias attract majestic monarch butterflies and bees and the list goes on and on. I speak from my own experience.

My personal interest in birds and birding was triggered by my grandfather who lived in the Carolina foothills and never tired of spotting, identifying and loving the birds around him. One of my sons asked me why my interest in birds was so strong – to which I pointed out that they are



everywhere and so beautiful and have such fabulous and often haunting songs. How could I NOT be curious? I believe he knows why now! The gift of a bird book is the perfect incentive for

children to use and cultivate this special pastime. A special holiday gift, Think of this when you begin your holiday shopping.

So the waters are flowing and the leaves are dropping...we now await the holidays and all that we have to be grateful for – including BIRDS!! 📖



Top row, left to right: Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Red-Bellied Woodpecker, Bluebird.
Second row: Hummingbird, Cardinal, Goldfinch, Carolina Chickadee.
Third row: Osprey, Bald-headed Eagle.
Editor's Note: As a special treat, inspired by Louise's article, I reached out to a special friend and photographer extraordinaire Kathy Green, Somerset County Garden Club, for a few of her fantastic photographs...enjoy, and thank you Kathy!

*with help from the HSG Co-Chairs – Joey Frankos, Trish Reynolds and Carolyn Rugg

The Historical Society Gardens (HSG) have experienced big changes, thanks to the efforts of the HSG Committee! If you didn't have an opportunity to watch the transformation this past season, you can look forward to spring when the



Behind the Historical Society...before TCGC planted and maintained he gardens.

new plantings will begin to fill in. The area bordering the brick wall along Glenwood Avenue and an area bending around towards the Huxley Herb Garden have been redefined as a continuous garden. New plants, fresh mulch, and a serpentine border, defined by a sharply cut edge, make an area that had been filled with boxwood a fresh garden to enjoy.



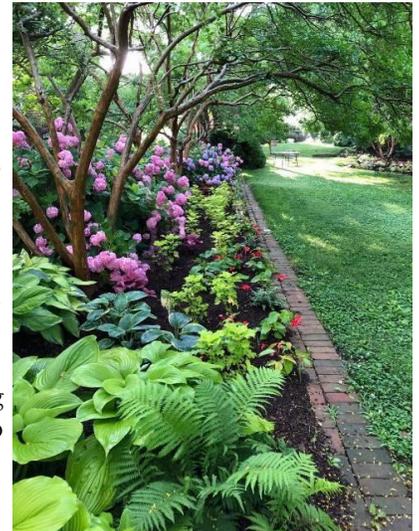
Boxwood Allee
Photo, Marsie Hawkinson

In the 1970s, TCGC planted 100 English boxwoods in the garden. A picture of the new plantings was included in the 100th Anniversary book, *Talbot County Garden Club 1917-2017*.

The boxwoods grew into a beautiful evergreen allee the length of the garden. Unfortunately, the last three years were not kind to these boxwoods. Month after month, they browned out and died.

Our club's HSG Committee began a project to redefine the newly exposed parts of the garden. We developed a three year project plan and received budgeted funds for remediation of the area. A generous club member donated funds to have some of the boxwoods removed and to purchase two ornamental trees. Last winter, we held a design session with several members of the committee to lay out the boundary of the new bed and to talk about the types of plants to use in the newly opened area.

In 2018, we planted two gorgeous 'Rising Sun' redbud trees and three hydrangeas at the west end of the area to create a lower boundary to the garden in front of Joseph's Cottage leading toward the Huxley Herb Garden. We finished installing the brick border of the long formal beds along the south edge using bricks found on the property, and we planted tall shade-tolerant annuals, including coleus and begonias, that beautifully filled the area which had been covered with the diseased boxwoods.



Perennial Garden with Brick Border
Photo, Trish Reynolds

The Huxley Herb Garden was refreshed. It now offers a magical treat for the senses and attracts many pollinators and a variety of butterflies.

Spring of 2019 brought new plantings along the undulating edge of the Glenwood Avenue garden, backed by the brick wall that now is visible. The perennials include Astilbe 'Visions in Pink', Japanese painted fern 'Burgundy Lace', Heuchera 'Silver Scrolls', 'Frosted Violet', and 'Citronelle', Hakonechloa 'All Gold', and lady's mantle along with native goat's beard and columbine. We planted annual begonias, caladium, and coleus to provide fullness and color while waiting for the perennials to bulk up. The gardens on both sides of the grass walkway provide a new, but beautiful, feel to the Historical Society Gardens.

Last month, after the rain finally returned, we planted several groves of shade-tolerant shrubs between the crepe

myrtles and the brick wall that will provide three seasons of interest with fragrant flowers, colorful autumn foliage, and



New Shade Border
Photo, Trish Reynolds

berries. These native shrubs include Bottlebrush Buckeye, Summersweet, Virginia Sweetspire, Fothergilla, and red chokeberry 'Brilliantissima'. We also planted a Witchhazel 'Arnold's Promise' to brighten up very early spring with its yellow flowers and a Doublefile Viburnum that will be covered in white flowers a bit later. The shrubs will create habitat in the garden to support birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. We plan to leave the remaining boxwoods in place

until they need to be removed. The new shrubs will grow up and disguise the declining boxwoods.



Huxley Herb Garden
Photo, Trish Reynolds

The HSG Committee thanks the club for providing support so we could begin replanting such a large section of the garden. We also thank our dedicated committee members for their hard work to make the plans a reality. We invite all of you to come to the garden next spring, summer, and fall to see the new plantings. We hope you enjoy the transformation as much as we do! ☺

An Acquired Prairie Wildflower Meadow.....Lin Moeller

When it comes to Conservation, a planted meadow of wildflowers and grasses is a top choice with many environmental benefits. It absorbs rainfall and limits runoff into streams during wet weather periods. During dry periods, it is able to withstand droughts. It is a paradise for pollinators with many species of bees and butterflies flitting about, and it's an excellent food source for other insects from ladybugs to praying mantis. Finally, it provides food and shelter for many birds and animals. My husband Paul and I acquired a large prairie wildflower meadow over a year ago when we moved from Easton to Trappe. The previous owner had one planted a few years ago covering a couple of acres. It consisted of a 10 foot wide strip of medium height grasses and wildflowers flanking each side of the drive and much taller prairie grasses behind, stretching toward the side property lines. No literature was left by the previous owner stating when or what grasses or

wildflowers were planted, nor the care and maintenance of it, other than verbally told to mow it down in midwinter. Keeping the past year's growth into the winter months is recommended for it provides foraging and shelter to many birds and animals. It was not uncommon to see finches, bluebirds, rabbits, fox and deer as we walked or drove along it. Very noticeable 'cut through' paths in the grasses created by larger animals, and matted areas where deer settled at night were also evident. (My thought was that if animals were sustained in the meadow grasses, they wouldn't forage in my perennial bed near the house. Sadly, not the case with rabbits!) Last winter, after investigating the mowing off of the meadow and the cost, my husband felt it would be both time and cost effective (and more fun) to rent a tractor and pull behind mower/mulcher. Timing was important for too early would deprive animals of food and shelter and too late would

threaten the early emerging spring wildflowers and daffodils (also planted by the previous owner).



Prior to the mowing it was necessary to tromp through the area, marking where old tree stumps, rocks, or holes may be hidden. The mowing took place during the second week of February, two weeks later than planned as the meadows had been too soggy. The tractor and mower/mulcher were delivered and my husband went to work, first chopping everything off to an eight inch level, then in the opposite direction a couple

inches shorter. After four hours the process was complete and the view was wide open to the street. It was ready for new growth.

The daffodils were the first to bloom and as the spring warmth encouraged other wildflowers – lupines, columbine,



sweet William, Dames Rocket, foxglove, etc. were found. The weeks and months progressed and my list of wildflowers that bloomed, mostly the 10 foot strips along the drive lengthened to include black eyed Susans, daisies, coreopsis, purple coneflower, blanket flower, gloriosa daisy, Queen Anne lace, butterfly weed, Joe Pye weed, aster, golden rod, and many more, along with a scattering of others I was unable to identify.

As the wildflower meadow changed through the seasons, the year has been one of learning about the care and maintenance of it and what specific wildflowers had been planted. It was



also noticing what invasive, unwanted plants and tree saplings had crept and vined their way into sections of the meadow and would have to be dealt with.

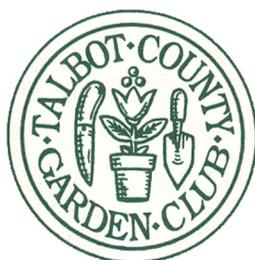
Wildflower prairie grass meadows appear carefree, but they are a lot of work, keeping the invasive plants out, mowing them off each year and replanting wildflowers as needed. I am presently ordering wildflower seeds to reseed some sections this fall. Since mowing off the meadow last February, my husband has purchased his own pull-behind mower/mulcher. Our plan is to mow sections of the wildflower strips this fall, rake, scatter seed and slightly cover. Hopefully next spring their shoots will be emerging, with blooms to come.



Meadow gardens need to be established and maintained with as much effort, care and expense as a perennial garden; from a Conservation point of view they are also worth it. 🛠️

(Photos courtesy of Lin Moeller)

Editor's Note: The Conservation Committee is planning a visit to Lin's Meadow Garden in 2020.



TALBOT COUNTY GARDEN CLUB

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