



# NEVER DONE!

THE GARDEN CLUB OF HARVARD  
VOLUME XXIX-ISSUE 7



## President Ponderings

Info: Jessie Panek



This spring I am trying to 'practice what I've been preaching' this last year, and it is very hard! I want my garden to be as ecologically supportive as it can be, which means changing a lot of my habits.

I managed to 'leave the leaves' last fall without too much difficulty; after all, the garden was going to bed for the year. But I generally like things tidy, so it is very challenging NOT to clean the beds up this spring. I intended to just wait until it was warm enough for the various insects to have come out of their overwintering

places, so my first step was to figure out when that might be.

I heard some people say I should wait until we had five consecutive days of temps over 50 degrees. Another source said I should really wait until we were past our last frost, which seemed pretty extreme to me—I think of mid-May as our last frost date. Surely I didn't need to wait that long! I carefully watched the weather, and looked up average temperatures in our area. It seems that in the Fitchburg to Lowell region, the week following April 7 or 8 has an average high over 50 degrees, which interestingly also corresponds to the average low being just above freezing. Of course, that is the average, and we are likely to have a frost in later April or early May, but I figure insects could find protected spots (like under leaves!) for a late frost.

But then one writer suggested that perhaps we don't need to 'clear' our gardens off at all... and I started questioning-- why do we do it? I suspect it is mostly because we are still in the mindset that we garden to control nature, as if we could do things better than nature does. I am sure there are some good reasons that cleaning up has become the norm, such as removing diseased foliage. But you could/should do that in the previous season, when you see you have a disease issue.



OK, why else do I want to 'clean up'? I know I am eager to see new shoots coming up, and having the ground clear means I can see them all right away and find my labels and know where to look for favorite plants. But can I be a little more patient? I also like to be able to weed out grass and other perennial weeds in early spring when I can easily see them... but maybe they will be somewhat suppressed by the natural mulch?

I have worried that deep piles of leaves will keep some plants from getting the light they need, and they will be deformed and yellow when they come up. This is perhaps my major concern, but I am seeing that many plants are quite capable of pushing through the leaf layer, even little bulbs. Where the leaves are especially deep, or I see them being pushed up in a dense mat, I am using my hands to gently lift the mat and toss the leaves into the air so they break apart and fall more

loosely back to the ground. The looser leaves help protect the emerging shoots (which may be very pale) as they adjust to the sunlight, but the leaves can stay in the bed.

I have to admit that so far this approach has saved a great deal of time and labor in the garden! First of all, from not cutting back plants in the fall. I cut some of the tough aster stems down this week, but many dry stems are now easy to just snap off in bunches with my hands, whereas in the fall I had to cut each stem with the clippers. And not raking off the beds, all while worrying about uprooting plants that might have heaved a bit over winter—that's another big time savings.

Another benefit: having left the leaves and other plant debris over the winter may have saved some plants that need the insulating protection of snow. And now the soil is protected from drying out as quickly this spring (when we are already feeling very dry!), and I will only need to add purchased mulch in a few places.



I think the 'worst' (aesthetically speaking) is almost behind me, as I hope and expect to see new growth hide the old leaves and stems very soon now. As a bit of a compromise, I have picked up and moved to my compost pile the bulkier, long stems that I cut down—those asters, phlox, joe pye weed and such—because they were what looked most 'messy' to me and would take the longest to break down.

I will have to move aside this natural mulch when I go to move and divide plants, of course, but that is in a relatively small number of places. I'm also going to remove most of the leaves off of my iris, because I know

they don't like to be mulched at all. If I don't see anything breaking through the leaves in another week

where I know there should be plants, I will do some uncovering, but I don't think waiting is going to do major harm. I may decide that I really want to clean off my epimedium—which although they are pushing through and blooming just fine, are so delicate it is hard to see them against the old leaves. I will probably learn there are some less vigorous plants that do need assistance to get through the leaves, and that there are places where the leaves pile up too deeply to leave them all, but learning is what it is all about, and I'll try to remember (!) those lessons next year.

I'll let you know what I discover. But I'm feeling really good about leaving all the leaves and most of the plant debris in my beds to provide homes for the insects that are so essential to our ecology.

Happy Spring! Jessie

P.S. I am looking forward to this program: May 17 Grow Native Massachusetts 'Evening with Experts' called "Messy or Magic". <https://grownativemass.org/Our-Programs/evenings-experts>

## April Program: PEONIES: LOVE OF MY LIFE

### *GENERAL MEETING ON MONDAY, APRIL 24*

9:30 am

at St. Theresa Church, 15 Still River Road

Program: Peonies: Love of My Life

Speaker: Christine Paxhia



Go back in time to the origin of peonies and learn a bit about their history. The "how to" part of this presentation will teach you to select, install, care for, and divide these beautiful and much-loved plants.

Then sit back & feast your eyes on a colorful photographic showcase of the many different varieties & types of peonies (picture from Christine's [website](#))



# Membership

Info: Nancy Hartshorne



Welcome new member: Margaret Kusner

[Read her article](#) about Bloom N Art in the Harvard Press.

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In Loving Memory: Nancy Gasser (July 11, 1938 – March 2, 2023)



Nancy was involved in Civic beautification around Still River  
and she always signed up for Library flowers or plants!

## THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

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Nancy Hartshorne  
Membership

Hello fellow gardeners,

The warm, sunny days are here and our gardens beckon to us to come outside and play. We probably don't need much arm twisting to put down our pens, close our computers, and follow the siren call of spring.

But before we head outside, there is one inside chore that urgently needs your attention: to renew your membership to the Garden Club of Harvard for the upcoming July 2023 - June 2024 year.

Here's how:

Print the membership form on the next page of this newsletter.

Fill in the form's information. To save you time, write "NC" on the lines next to address, phone, and email if you've had no changes since last year.

Please bring the form and a check, payable to the Garden Club of Harvard, or your credit card (yes, we now have PayPal) to our next meeting on April 24th.

Or, mail both the membership form and your check to ...

Nancy Hartshorne  
Membership, Garden Club of Harvard  
160 Prospect Hill Road  
Harvard, MA 01451

Deadline for membership renewal is July 1.

Happy spring!

# *The Garden Club of Harvard - Membership Form*



We provide a forum for people interested in gardening, horticulture, conservation, flower arranging, and landscaping. Members share their expertise and learn from speakers and field trips. Club activities and service projects give members hands-on opportunities to learn, be creative and give to the community.

An **Active** member attends Garden Club meetings, participates on a service committee, serves on one hospitality committee per year, and helps with the annual plant sale. An active membership may optionally include a family member living at the same residence.

A **Supporting** member may attend meetings but need not take part in other activities, although many volunteer to do so.

Please circle the level of membership you're interested in:

**Active Member(s)** \$35.00 (Add \$5.00 for 2nd family member)      **Supporting Member** \$50.00

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address AND Post Office Box, if applicable. Town and Zip Code if other than Harvard.

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Information in the Yearbook is used for intra-Club correspondence only.

Day & month (not year!) of your birthday: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred month to serve on Hospitality Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about the Garden Club (if you're a new member)?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please make your dues check payable to **The Garden Club of Harvard**. Send your check AND this completed form to:

**Garden Club of Harvard Membership**

**c/o Nancy Hartshorne**

**160 Prospect Hill Road**

**Harvard, MA 01451**

## SERVICE COMMITTEES AND MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS/CHOICES

**Active** members are required to participate on at least one service committee. Please indicate your service choice(s).

\_\_\_\_ **Annual Luncheon:** Secures luncheon site and coordinates the annual meeting (June).

\_\_\_\_ **Awards:** Researches/promotes award opportunities for Club projects available through the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts.

\_\_\_\_ **Bloom N Art:** Organizes/participates in annual (March) exhibit showcasing artwork from the Bromfield School students paired with flower arrangements created by members of the Club. And/or provides assistance in planning, publicity, volunteering at the event.

\_\_\_\_ **Book Club:** Leads/participates in a periodic garden-themed book club.

\_\_\_\_ **Civic Beautification:** Provides for annual/long-term beautification of visible public areas in Harvard and participates in seasonal plantings, upkeep, and watering.

\_\_\_\_ **Floral Arranging:** Organizes occasional workshops allowing members to learn about and improve their floral arranging skills.

\_\_\_\_ **Garden Therapy:** Works with selected groups of elders/assisted-living facilities, using plant materials and garden projects as therapy (October through May).

\_\_\_\_ **Garden Tour:** Organizes a tour of local gardens to visit after our annual meeting in June.

\_\_\_\_ **Graduation Flowers:** Organizes/helps make floral decorations for Bromfield graduation.

\_\_\_\_ **Historian:** Saves/files appropriate materials about the Club at the Harvard Public Library.

\_\_\_\_ **Holiday Greens Workshop:** Organizes/participates in workshop where members provide greens and trimmings and create winter arrangements for homebound residents.

\_\_\_\_ **Horticulture:** Presents information about cultivation of plants at the monthly meetings.

\_\_\_\_ **Hospitality:** Organizes the refreshments for monthly Garden Club meetings. *All active members are expected to contribute to Hospitality once a year.*

\_\_\_\_ **Library Books:** Works with the director of the Harvard Public Library to choose appropriate books related to gardening/horticulture for the Club to donate to the Library.

\_\_\_\_ **Library Flowers:** Organizes/helps provide arrangements/plants to be displayed weekly at the Harvard Public Library and at the monthly Garden Club meetings.

\_\_\_\_ **Membership:** Keeps records of members, officers, committee and project chairs and member activities. Organizes the annual membership drive, nametags for meetings, greets and provides outreach to new members.

\_\_\_\_ **Nature Trails:** Leads nature walks – meets Thursday mornings throughout the year, weather permitting.

\_\_\_\_ **Newsletter:** Publishes/distributes a monthly Garden Club of Harvard newsletter online.

\_\_\_\_ **Nominating:** Nominates new officers, committee and project chairs to fill vacancies.

\_\_\_\_ **Plant Sale:** Organizes the annual (May) plant sale. *All active members are required to help with the sale, the Club's major fundraiser.*

\_\_\_\_ **Programs:** Plans and organizes speakers/programs for monthly Garden Club meetings (September-April), joint meetings, and special events.

\_\_\_\_ **Publicity:** Provides information to the public about the Club's monthly meetings and special events in the Harvard Press and digital social media (i.e. Facebook and Nextdoor.)

\_\_\_\_ **Special Activities:** Plans and organizes a variety of field trips of interest to members.

\_\_\_\_ **Webmaster:** Maintains the official website of the Garden Club of Harvard.

\_\_\_\_ **Yearbook:** Publishes the yearly program and membership contact information.

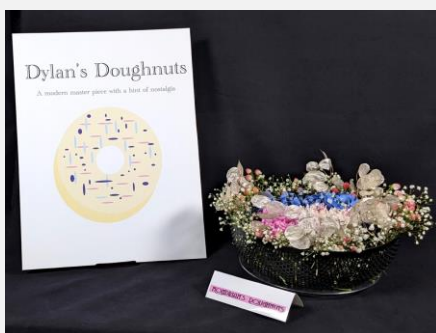
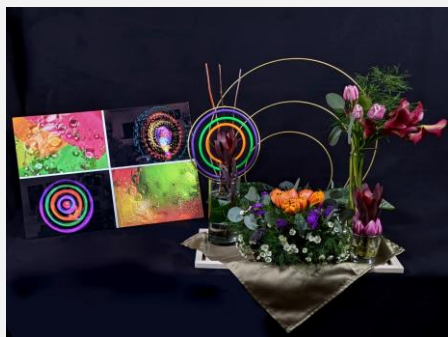
Please indicate any other special skills you might offer to the Garden Club (i.e., finance, technology, graphic design, desktop publishing etc.)



# Bloom N Art: March 25-26

Deborah Dowson, AnaMaria Nanra, Marijke Vallaey

It was a wonderful exhibit. Over 350 people came last weekend and the [website](https://www.bloomnart.online) had over 500 visits. Enjoy the pictures of the arrangements made by first-time participants. We hope they will join again next year!



Arrangements made by:

Nelly Hernandez, Nancy Hartshorne, Carlene Phillips, Katie Gandek, Barbara Cerva, Kate Connolly, Donna Guarino, Amy Cataudella, Nancy Labbe, Judy Ockene.

<https://www.bloomnart.online>



# PUBLICITY

Info: Kate Guthro

<https://www.harvardgardenclub.org>

[Garden Club of Harvard](#)

[Bloomnart.online](#)



Suzan will be in the Milton Gallery on Thursdays in April  
and Wednesdays in May from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

[More info here](#)

# Hort Corner

Info: Betsy Morton



On the same theme of repairing damage to a tree or bush—mid February I noticed that this witch hazel had a prominent broken branch. I have no idea when this happened.

This witch hazel's limbs are growing laterally, rather than vertically. To repair this, when the ground is frozen, calls for a way that doesn't use stakes. After binding the break, Terry made (found) two slingshot like pieces and just placed them on the ground to hold the branch up. They're still in place so we'll see if that branch will leaf out.



This drought has continued through the winter and early spring.

Make sure you water seedlings and seeds in the ground during the spring if it remains extensively dry.

# Library Flowers

Info: Mary Jane Ellison



Pam Marston



AnaMaria Nanra



Jessie Panek



Margaret Murphy

05/1: Dee Lee	05/22: Kathy Jackson
05/8: Marty Green	05/29: MaryAnn Piasecki
05/15: Kate Connolly	



# Earth Day Show & Tell Around Town

*Harvard's Climate Initiative Committee and Harvard Energy Advisory Committee invite you to join them for **Earth Day Show & Tell Around Town** on **Saturday, April 22 from 11 am – 4 pm** (rain date Sunday, April 23).*

This is our second town wide event and we have added a lot of attractions this year. You'll have the opportunity to talk to your neighbors and experts about steps to reduce one's carbon footprint through actions small and large. Visit homes, farms and the HUB at Hildreth Elementary where you will find vendors, individuals and organizations who provide and/or have experience with various types of equipment and practices.

The Garden Club of Harvard will have a booth at the Hildreth Hub where volunteers from our club will be teaching people to recognize and control/eradicate invasive plants that are common in our area.

**At 1:00pm, behind Hildreth - New England Botanical Garden at Tower Hill's Land Steward, Robert Graham**, will make a **45 Minute presentation with a Q&A** to follow about the sustainable initiatives NEBG has undertaken to decarbonize their landscaping equipment and tools. NEBG's commitment to using low impact equipment has earned the AGZA Green Zone Certification. They are the first botanical garden to achieve this recognition. Come and find out how they do it!

Activities for kids can be found at several locations.

PLEASE COME!

Volunteers needed! If you can volunteer any time to provide general help with the event, please contact Deborah O'Rourke: [deborahorourke@verizon.net](mailto:deborahorourke@verizon.net)

For more information: [Harvard climate initiative](#)

To obtain a map of locations with descriptions, Register [here](#)

# Plant Sale: May 20, 2023

Info: Marijke Vallaeys, Carole Herbin, Margaret Murphy



Perennials, Annuals, Vegetables, Herbs,  
Shrubs, House, Rare & Specialty Plants

The Garden Club of Harvard

# plant sale

**SATURDAY MAY 20**  
**9am to Noon**

Westward Orchards Farm Stand • 178 Mass Ave  
Cash, Checks, or Credit Cards • Rain or Shine

*Proceeds from the sale are directed towards encouraging a love of gardening in the Harvard community through grants, education, outreach and civic beautification.*

To sign up for potting:

[SignUpGenius](#)

To sign up for working the day of  
the sale: [SignUpGenius](#)

Call or [email us](#) if you need help  
with Signing Up.

Potting has started.

*Lyn Herbolsheimer and Pam Durrant.  
Lyn, Mary Jane Ellison, Maribeth and  
Maureen Remeika*



# Axes and saws!

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Potting workshops have started. And yes, that's right, we use axes and saws. In this picture you see our president in action with an ax, dividing a stubborn grass plant.

But let's start with the less threatening aspects of the process.

We start at 9:30 am. By that time we will have opened the barn doors and taken out the three tables. That's our workspace.

The leaders will pull out the barrel and fill it with Promix. We have to add water, find a shovel to mix. The mixture can't be too dry, it can't be too wet. It has to be just perfect. There are some

experienced potters who have a sense of when to stop.



We mostly use this pot, it's large enough for most plantings and it's sturdy.

Just put an inch or less of soil in the bottom of the pot.

Because plant roots need 'elbow room', we need to trim them to be shorter than the depth of the pot.

Bring your scissors and pruner, gloves if you don't like dirt on your hands and under your fingernails.

Suspend plant with one hand at correct height and fill in around it with soil, mix with other hand. Place fingers in the corners and firm plant into pot.

Keep only one kind of plant on the table at a time to prevent mix-ups.

Label !

Place same kind of plants into flat buckets so they can soak up water from the bottom. (10 to 15 minutes). Watering from the top works also.

Put only one type of plant per tray so we can add others if they come in later. It's also easier for pricing.

Take out weed grasses by the roots! Wash off the soil of the plants you donate. No jumping worms!

And the ax? That's for the grasses. Hack them in pieces with an ax. Put them in a BIG pot.

And how about the saw? Hostas! Saw them apart with a bow saw, 5 to 7 sprouts to a pot, unless it's a choice variety.



# Nature Trails

Info: Pam Durrant

April 6: West Oak Conservation land with views to mountains, a beaver pond, several stream crossings.

April 27: Fruitlands trails

# Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry Walk

Info: Bill Loehfelm



The poster for the Spring Into Action 5K walk features a white sneaker with the Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry logo on the side. The text on the poster reads: **Sunday, May 7, 2023**, **1 PM to 3 PM**, **Rogers Field, Devens, MA**, **Spring Into Action 5K**. Below this, it says **LACE UP YOUR SNEAKERS!** and describes the walk as a fundraiser for the Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry, where participants can enter as individuals or as a team. It also includes a **DON'T WANT TO WALK?** section encouraging support for others and mentioning that event sponsors are needed. The poster concludes with **For details, visit LFWalk.org**. Two circular photos show participants: one of two people walking a dog, and another of a person jumping over a finish line.

The Garden Club will walk as a team.

Join in the fun and sign up!

# Annual Meeting/ Luncheon/ Garden Tours

Info: Maria Day

***RESERVE THE DATE!***  
***JUNE 5, 2023***

***MORE INFO IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER***

# Civic Beautification

Info: Kathy Jackson, Maribeth Marcello and MaryAnn Piasecki

Dear Gardeners,

There is a feeling of spring in the air and it's time to start planning our own gardens as well as planning the beautification of our town.

The civic beautification team is reaching out to include more garden club members for an opportunity to help from design to maintenance.

We are looking for volunteers to help with the plantings and waterings for this spring, summer and fall by forming teams in three main locations. Each team of three includes a mentor and 2 additional volunteers, that will work to design, purchase, plant and water the arrangements that are done throughout the town.

We have created [a signup genius](#) to help with volunteering and location. You can sign up for one season or all three!

If you have any questions, please contact MaryAnn at [maryann.piasecki@gmail.com](mailto:maryann.piasecki@gmail.com)

## From our members



*Madelaine Ferguson sent us these beautiful pictures of spring at Tower Hill.*

# Officers for 2022-2023

President	Jessie Panek
Vice President	Bill Loehfelm
Recording Secretary	Stephanie Hooper
Treasury	Deborah O'Rourke

## *Committee Chairs*

Historian	Carlene Phillips
Hospitality	Suzan Osborn
Membership	Nancy Hartshorne
Newsletter	Marijke Vallaes
Nomination	MaryAnn Piasecki, Janice Rusiecki
Programs	Margaret Murphy, Janice Rusiecki
Publicity	Kate Guthro

## *Projects*

Annual Lunch	Maria Day
Civic Beautification	Kathy Jackson, MaryAnn Piasecki
Garden Therapy	Mary Maxwell, Janice Rusiecki
Garden tour	
Greens workshop	Kathy Jackson, Nancy Webber
Graduation flowers	Kathy Hewett
Horticulture	Betsy Morton
Library books	Heidi Siegrist
Library/meeting flowers	MaryJane Ellison
Nature Trails	Pam Durrant
Plant Sale	Carole Herbin, Margaret Murphy, Marijke Vallaes
Web Master	Betsy Howard
Yearbook	Marijke Valleys
Bloom N Art	Deb Dowson, AnaMaria Nanra, Marijke Vallaes

*Thanks to Carlene Phillips for proofreading, always much appreciated!*