

MARCH 2022

Bloomin' Times

www.rakeandhoegc.org



IN THIS ISSUE

CLUB NEWS

RHGC History

Mobile Meals

Page 2

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Page 3

HORTICULTURE SPOTLIGHT

“Caring for Houseplants”

by Barbara Mullin

Page 4

The Zygo Family

Page 5

CLUB PHOTOGRAPHERS

Pages 6 & 7

GARDEN POTPOURRI

Page 8

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Kudzu and Cogon Grass

Page 9

BREAKING NEWS

Page 10

“Hilton Head, S.C.”

Photograph by Gayle Lechner

MEMBER NEWS

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Looking back at Rake & Hoe History

March 1973—Thought for the day:

“Just think, by this time next month, spring will be well on its way.”

March 1975— *“We all wish to thank the arrangers and hostesses for the meeting LOOKING AHEAD TO SPRING. The meeting was called off at the last minute because of snow after all their preparations had been made.”*

March 1984— *“Did you force your branches? You can still do it, and think how spring-like it will be!”*

March 1987— *“Watch for new faces at your feeders as the seasons change. How many of these birds will you see this month? Blue jay, cardinal, chickadees, house finch, titmouse, English sparrow, mourning dove, and white-throated sparrow.”*

March 1994— *“Sign up for the wildly anticipated DECK THE HALLS, our open homes tour for next year. Everyone will be expected to work, so you might as well sign up for the job you want, instead of being assigned to something you'd rather not do!”*

JUDY KAMPE COMPETITION

This is the perfect time to start thinking about your fairy house design for the Judy Kampe competition in May.

It's simple: The houses must be made from all natural materials (the base structure may be purchased). 15" X 15" maximum.

That's it. Have fun!!! Lee Perry



MOBILE MEALS

2-1-22

Twelve RHGC members volunteered their time and talents and created 60 magnificent arrangements.



L-R: Kris Luka, Karen Jolley-Gates, Clare Minick, Margot Partridge, Beth Siano, Mary Foley Smith, Natalie Peitsinovski, Richard Pelikan, Jeanie Pelikan, Maryfran Annese, Betty Gulino and Mary Lou Nolas.



Thanks to Our Contributors

Barbara Mullin, Gayle Lechner, Mary Foley Smith, Margot Partridge, The Pelikans, Diana Kazazis, Lee Perry, Inge Bossert, Barb Spellmeyer, Anna Daurio

President: Beth Siano

Editor: Joe Da Rold

Member Birthdays in March

1. Joanne Womelsdorf
12. Irene Greenstein
18. Nina Sylvester



CLUB NEWS

MARCH

Photography Zoom Show and Tell

March 25th, 10:00am

Topic: "Emerging Spring"

Take a picture that demonstrates the dramatic change in nature.

Send me your photo by March 19th, along with something about your picture at that time. *Margot*

Juniors

"Good Insects in the Garden"

March 16—3:30 pm

Home of Sharon Shiraga

Jardine Academy

Community Projects Committee

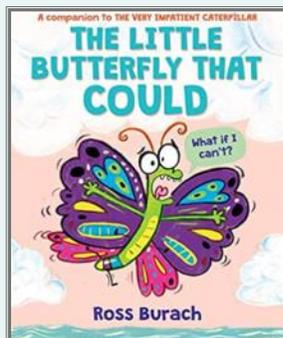
March 3—10:30 am

Butterfly Ornament Workshop

MaryLou Nolas and Jeanie Pelikan

April 5—10:30 am

Decorate tree at Jardine with custom butterflies.



HIGHLIGHTS

RHGC General Meeting

3/9/2022

Native Wildflowers and Ferns for the Home Garden

Presented by

Hubert Ling



APRIL

Activities & Events

April 4—Noon

Board Meeting
Home of Diana Kazazis

April 13—Noon

General Meeting
Scotch Hills Country Club

April 20—3:30 pm

Hypertufa Rocks & Planters
Juniors Meeting
Home of Sharon Shiraga

April 21—10:15 am

Community Gardens Cleanup
Northside Train Station

April 26—10:30 am

Bows Workshop
for Jardine Academy Plants
Home of MaryLou Nolas

April 27—9:00 am

Grounds For Sculpture
Photography Trip
Contact Margot Partridge

April 28—10:00 am

Spring Plant Exchange
Home of Barbara Spellmeyer

HORTICULTURE SPOTLIGHT

Helpful hints about caring for houseplants

By Barbara F. Mullin



I do not pretend to be a "know-it-all" about houseplant care and propagation. "**Success with Houseplants,**" published by Readers Digest in 1979, has been my favorite house plant guide for many years. The book contains many nice photos of plants as they might be displayed in our home; these are in the front. The major use of this book is as a source to identify house plants and once identified find out about the one you are interested in. All of the plants are in Botanical name order A/Z with the common name listed also.

Each plant name includes a color drawing of how the plants appear and usually with several cultivars shown. The chief plus factor in this book is in the paintings of the plants which make it easy for someone with little plant experience to leaf through & locate it visually. There are also the basic care and propagation methods included.

I've been using this book with great success for many years and when I see one at a book sale, I pick it up to give to special friends with a similar interest.

I have learned a lot about the plants that I have and that do well for me. I call those plants "Forgiving Plants." Among these are Sansevieria better known as Snake Plant or Mother-in-Law's plant and a moniker that is not deserved and denigrates my late mother-in-law, who was a wonderful person.

Well, these are plants that usually stay indoors during the warm months along with Syngoniums and Zyo or Christmas Cactus and Anthuriums. Watering of these plants differs according to the plant. But Sansevieria and those Zyo or Christmas Cactus do not need water too often. Most plants do not like to sit in water. I've come up with my own method of watering. It works well with small and medium sized plants.

I call it the "drench and drain method." Each plant is soaked in warm water for a few seconds until all is wet and drained, then replaced in the cover pot or saucer. Sometimes I do this by using a small bucket filled with the warm water and some added water soluble fertilizer, but not too often. At other times I simply run warm through the plant and drain in the sink. They all seem to thrive and do very well.

I have about seven Orchid plants, which during the less active times do go outside and receive benign neglect. During the winter they also get the "drench and drain" method and they also do quite well, sometimes surprising me with some new stems of bloom in the Spring. As with many things in life, if it works for you, keep doing it that way. Give the "Drench and Drain" method a try on one or two plants and see how they respond.

[Barbara Mullin joined RHGC in 1999. She is certified as a Master Flower Show Judge through the National Garden Club, and the winner of the prestigious Leadership Award of Rake and Garden Club.]



HORTICULTURE SPOTLIGHT

The Zygo Cactus Family

Last December, Faten shared a photo that revealed how to differentiate among the Thanksgiving Cactus, the Christmas Cactus, and the Easter Cactus. This month, in time for Easter, we share information about their care and keeping.

EASTER CACTUS

Unlike the Thanksgiving and Christmas cacti, the Easter cactus is native to Brazil's natural forests. The Easter cactus blooms late winter to early spring. The segments, which are the leaves of the plant, are added onto by new growth.

The Easter cactus plant (*Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri*) comes in a variety of bloom colors. Flower tones range from white to red, orange, peach, lavender and pink. Even following its bloom, the plant has an interesting appeal in its unusual shape. Getting an Easter cactus to bloom the next year requires a special set of conditions which amount to a form of neglect. These plants perform best in bright light, but not direct sunlight. Unlike desert cacti, they need cooler temperatures, even during the day, and will bloom for months in nighttime temperatures of 55 to 60 degrees F. (13-16 C.). Keep the soil lightly moist and allow it to dry out before watering again.

Good Easter cactus care means repotting the plant every two years in spring. The plants enjoy being pot bound, but give it new soil and return the plant to the same pot. Fertilize monthly after the bloom period with a 10-10-10, or food with a low nitrogen count. Provide some humidity if your home is dry. Mist or place on a saucer filled with pebbles and a little water. Evaporation will moisten the air around the plant.

To encourage flowering, stop feeding them. Then move the plant where it has 12 to 14 hours of darkness. Best bud-set occurs when temperatures are 50 F, (10 C.). Water sparingly from October to November. By December, you can move the plant somewhere warmer with a 60 to 65 degree range (16-18 C.). The plant will flower in February to March.



Read more at Gardening Know How: How To Care For Easter Cactus Houseplants.

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/cacti-succulents/easter-cactus/caring-for-easter-cactus.htm>

THANKSGIVING CACTUS

Both Thanksgiving and Christmas cacti are native to the tropical forests of Brazil. *Schlumbergera truncata* is called a leaf cactus but it is not a true cactus. It is an epiphyte.

If you acquired a Thanksgiving Cactus in November, it is either Thriving, Dying, or Dead. Yet, reportedly, the Thanksgiving cactus is an easy to grow interior plant

Those of us who live where temperatures get cold have to create false conditions indoors to protect them from the cold, but the plants can tolerate cool temps down to 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4 C.) and reduced light, including artificial light. Start forcing Thanksgiving cactus to bloom in late summer to early fall.

Read more at Gardening Know How: Thanksgiving Holiday Cactus Plant: Tips For Growing Thanksgiving Cactus <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/cacti-succulents/thanksgiving-cactus/thanksgiving-cactus-plant.htm>

CHRISTMAS CACTUS

True to its name, the Christmas cactus blooms around the winter holidays. But perhaps you would like to learn something that's not self-evident? Such as: Why do the leaves turn red or purple?

A purplish tint is normal, but your cactus could be in need of monthly feeding (spring to mid-autumn). General purpose fertilizer will do the trick, but the cactus may need more magnesium. Dissolve one teaspoon of Epsom salts into one gallon of water, but do not use the mixture the same week you use the fertilizer.

Your plant might also be rootbound. If so, it may not be absorbing nutrients effectively. Here's the conundrum: Christmas cactus thrives with crowded roots. So, repot only if the cactus has been in the same container for at least two or three years.

Read more at Gardening Know How: Purple Christmas Cactus Leaves: Why Do Christmas Cactus Leaves Turn Purple <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/cacti-succulents/christmas-cactus/purple-christmas-cactus-leaves.htm>

CLUB PHOTOGRAPHERS



Photo by Anna Daurio



Photo by Margot Partridge



Photo by Margot Partridge



Photo by the Pelikans

CLUB PHOTOGRAPHERS



Photo by Inge Bossert



Photo by Barb Spellmeyer



Photo by Margot Partridge



Photo by Diana Kazazis

GARDEN POTPOURRI

“LASAGNA” PLANTING

Lasagna planting means planting layers of early, mid, and late spring blooming bulbs on top of each other.



First, pour a couple inches of soil into your pot.

Start with the larger bulbs, like daffodils, that need to be planted deep. Make sure the pointy end points up. Cover the bulbs with an inch or so of soil and that completes your first layer of lasagna.

Next are tulips, pointy end up. You can place bulbs closer together for a fuller display, but make sure to leave at least half an inch of space between them. Add more potting soil, break up any clots, and that's your second layer.

The smallest bulbs go on the top layer of your lasagna. You can use glory of the snow or crocuses for early spring color or grape hyacinth for longer lasting blooms. Plant your bulbs, add a top layer of potting soil, then give your pots a big drink.

Storing Lasagna Planted Bulbs: If you live in a warmer area, you can store your pots outside where they will receive water from the rain. If you live somewhere with freezing temperatures, store your pots in a garage or tucked near your house. Make sure to water them every few weeks.

Read more at Gardening Know How: *How To Plant Bulbs In Pots – Lasagna Style* <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/bulbs/how-to-plant-bulbs-in-pots-lasagna-style.htm>

HELLEBORE GROWING TIPS

- ◆ All parts of the plant are poisonous.
- ◆ Hellebores are famous for loving shade, but a bit of filtered sun will do magic. Full shade is not conducive to flowering.
- ◆ Remove damaged older leaves. Do not compost.
- ◆ Plants require good drainage.
- ◆ Do not over-fertilize. Too much nitrogen may result in lush foliage and a shortage of blooms.



GARDEN LIMERICKS

In the bleakest of gray winter days
When the sky is unseen 'neath the haze
I focus on knowing
What soon might be growing
To color our days of grays.

jdr

WINTER PRUNING FOR SHRUBS

While all deciduous plants go dormant in winter, not all of them should be pruned in winter. The appropriate time to trim these shrubs depends on a plant's growth habit, when they flower, and whether it is in good shape.

Healthy spring-flowering shrubs should be pruned back immediately after the blooms fade so that they can set buds for the following year. However, if they are overgrown and require a severe rejuvenation pruning, go ahead with cutting back plants in winter. The shrub will have an easier time recovering from a hard prune while it is dormant, which is a more important consideration than the next year's flowers.



Summer flowering shrubs should be pruned in late winter or early spring. This still gives them time to set flowers for the following year. Deciduous shrubs that aren't grown for flowers can be trimmed back at the same time.

Evergreen shrubs, like juniper and yew, should never be trimmed back in fall since the haircut makes them vulnerable to winter injury. Instead, prune these in late winter or early spring as well.

Read more at Gardening Know How: *Winter Pruning Guide – Learn About Cutting Back Plants In Winter* <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/trees/tgen/winter-pruning-guide.htm>

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

THE TRUTH ABOUT KUDZU

Introduced from Asia in the late 19th century as a garden novelty, kudzu is now America's most infamous weed. The urban legend is that kudzu grows a mile a minute and is unstoppable.



"I once believed that kudzu covered millions of acres, and its rampant growth could consume a large American city each year. But as I watched horses and cows mowing fields of kudzu down to brown stubs, as a botanist and horticulturist, I could not help but wonder why people thought kudzu was a unique threat when so many other vines grow just as fast in the warm, wet climate of the South."

When it was introduced to the South, farmers found little use



for a vine that could take years to establish, was nearly impossible to harvest and couldn't tolerate sustained grazing by horses or cattle.

As it turns out, there are more destructive invasive plants. The kudzu vine covers only about one-tenth of 1 percent of the South's 200 million acres of forest. By way of comparison, estimates indicate Asian privet has invaded 14 times kudzu's territory. Invasive roses have covered more than three times as much forestland as kudzu.

So the truth about kudzu is that it does spread in areas where there are no controls. But, a new control agent has appeared; one that is more destructive than the kudzu vine. Sounding the death knell for kudzu, the Japanese kudzu bug, first found in Atlanta six years ago, is now infesting vines throughout the South, including the kudzu.

Source: Bill Finch, Smithsonian Magazine.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/true-story-kudzu-vine-ate-south-180956325/>

THE THREAT OF COGON GRASS

"Some species are just different. Alligators, while certainly dangerous, are quite docile compared to the crocodile species. A similar comparison would be European honey bees and Africanized "killer" honey bees.



Cogon grass makes kudzu look like a lightweight. As invasive weed species go, you have some that are bad and then you have cogon grass. It is the 7th worst weed in the world, out of about 12,000 species of grass on the face of the Earth. It grows on every continent except Antarctica.

Like many invasive varieties, cogon grass has an ornamental quality that make it desirable to produce and sell. The seed head is fuzzy, white, and plume-like. It spreads not just by seeds, but by underground rhizomes at any time of year.



Once it is established in the understory of pine stands, it chokes out everything, including the weeds that normally grow in these areas. The native weeds provide valuable food and habitat for many native animals such as bobwhite quail, gopher tortoises, Indigo snakes, and others. Cogon grass creates a veritable desert under forest canopies. Controlled burning to eradicate it is difficult because it burns at 800 degrees Fahrenheit, which can damage or kill the pine trees.

Cogon grass is appearing in most of the southern United States, but it is concentrated from the Carolinas to Texas. It remains to be seen how effectively it can be controlled in its march across America.

Source: Buster Haddock, The Desert of the Cogon Grass.

<https://colorado.growingamerica.com/features/2020/12/desert-cogon-grass>



NANCY WALLACE AWARD—2022

Margot Partridge

Rosemary Almond Cookies

[Original recipe by Flo Stanley of Mililani Herbs.]

- ½ cup butter
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tbsp. Pernod (anise-flavored liqueur) or 1-2 tsp. Vanilla
- 1 ¼ cups flour
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1-2 Tbsp. chopped fresh rosemary. (1-2 tsp. dried)
- ¼ cup chopped almonds
- ¼ cup sugar

I made some adaptations in this recipe. First of all I substituted a cup to cup gluten free flour. Make sure xantham gum is in the flour blend you have chosen. And I flavored the cookies with Grand Mariner.

1. Cream together butter and ¼ cup sugar. Blend in Pernod or vanilla. Mix well.
2. Stir in flour, salt, rosemary, and almonds. Mix well. Dough should be soft but not sticky. Add more flour, 1 tbsp at a time, if needed.
3. Roll dough into walnut sized balls. Roll in ¼ cup sugar. Flatten between palms of hand to about ¼ thickness. Place on greased cookie sheet.
4. Bake at 350 for 15-20 minutes, or until golden. Keeps well in airtight container.

Note: Makes 25-30 cookies. Dough may be rolled into logs, placed in plastic wrap, and frozen for future baking. Thaw slightly, slice ¼" thick, dip in sugar, and bake.



L-R: Lila Spadaro, Brynn O'Grady, Arlene Bound, Arabella Morabito, Sophia Poeschl, Riley Dupuis

The Juniors made 30 small floral arrangements for Valentines Day, to donate to the



Adroit Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Rahway for the residents.



RHGC Members Invited

Join the Mindowaskin Urn Committee

The Urn garden group is looking for members to help design, install and water seasonal plantings in 2 urns at Mindowaskin Park. Our organizational meeting & lunch will be held in April. Email Lee Perry at vlhperry@gmail.com for more information.

Lee and Tracy at one of the Mindowaskin urns.



KITCHEN LIMERICK

I baked cookies
without leaving a mess
Thanks to ready-made dough,
I confess
But the problem I found
Every time I would count
There was always
one more cookie less.

jdr