

THE GARDENER



Newsletter of the Bowie-Crofton Garden Club

The aims of the Bowie-Crofton Garden Club shall be to promote interest in and develop skills in gardening through cooperation, joint efforts, and good fellowship.

February 2010

Next Monthly Meeting

By *Neil Potash*

The February Garden Club meeting will take place in the multi-purpose room of the Bowie City Hall, 2614 Kenhill Drive, Bowie, MD 20715 on Tuesday, February 23, 2010 at 7:30 PM.

The speaker will be Sandra Porterfield of Patuxent Nurseries, Bowie, who is a Master Gardener. She will discuss "New Plants and Ideas for your Spring garden" to get us all ready for the upcoming growing season. Sandra will bring in many different plants to amaze us and add to our spring garden plans. She will be ready to answer any of your questions about next year's gardens.

Presidents Comments

by *Jesse Terres*

Trace elements are elements essential for growth, but required only in minute amounts. I do not know all of the elements that are essential, but the more important ones are shown in the figure included with this article (See "How to Use Lime" article) and their availability to plants relative to the soil's pH. In most cases they are already available in sufficient amounts in your soil, but to be certain, one of the best sources is compost. I'm particularly fond of composted tree leaves because of their mineral content. If you do have a compost pile working and want to be certain you have all the elements, bring back a jug filled with sea water the next time you visit the shore and sprinkle it over your compost. Seawater has everything imaginable in it including silver and gold, just not enough to be profitable extracting it. I've never done that, but it does seem like a good idea. The bit of salt in the seawater will soon dissipate and do no harm. Admittedly salt is not good for the garden. However, we use a lot of salt on our sidewalks and streets, and our lawns and gardens don't seem to suffer. I have often thought about throwing in a handful of multivitamin/Multimineral Supplements. I'm certain that would work, but I don't like wasting the pills, and I know compost will do much more than provide elements.

You used to be able to buy trace elements from the nurseries, but when I query the nurseries about them, the clerks don't seem to know what I'm talking about. To find out what elements you may need to supplement your garden with, it pays to test your soil occasionally. Kits and meters are available from garden shops, catalogs, etc. The more important test is for pH. The pH itself isn't as important as which elements the pH will release and which elements it will prevent being released. Azaleas requiring a pH from 4.5 to 6.0

would have a much different exposure to the elements than tomatoes that prefer a pH from 5.5 to 7.5. I have had tomato plants produce in soil with a pH around 5.0, but not nearly as well as in soil with a pH above 6.0.

Minnie Zaccaria, from Long Branch, NJ, seven time winner of the New Jersey Championship Tomato Weigh Off from 1978 to 1998, and developer of the hybrid tomato plant Big Zac, which she has had weigh in at 6.16 pounds, knows that her soil is deficient in magnesium. Consequently, in the fall when gathering up leaves from around the city for her garden she also includes magnesium along with a fine sprinkling of lime to raise the pH a bit. Her source for the magnesium is probably from Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate). We serious “Mum” growers always give at least one feeding of Epsom salts (one tablespoon to a gallon of water) to our mums during the growing cycle. It is alleged that the magnesium improves the color. I also give my tomatoes a shot of it as well.

Meeting Minutes, January 26, 2010

The Tuesday, January 26th meeting of the Bowie Crofton Garden Club was held at the Bowie Community Center.

Jesse Terres, President, called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

The November minutes were unanimously approved.

Program

Neil Potash introduced the speaker, Bert Shankman who spoke on his photographic floral art. His presentation was named “Flowers Contain the Essence of Life.” Bert presented about 20 timed stills of common flowers opening and reaching their zenith. Bert shared that he was invited to a worldwide show in Fusion, China in December, 2009 to present his show. Bert can be reached at his website:

<http://www.cameraflora.com>

Old and New Business:

Jesse announced that he is looking forward to someone taking over the Plant Exchange.

Programs: Neil Potash said that Sandra Porterfield from Patuxent Nursery will be the February speaker. Neil also requested that BCGC members volunteer to serve as monthly speakers.

Membership: Brian Swetnam, V.P. Membership, introduced Carolyn Murphy, a new member. We had one visitor, D. J. Campbell, and Brian also introduced his mother. Brian also mentioned that our Garden Club will be included in a networking website called **meetup.com** since it has six million users and will give the BCGC more visibility.

Hospitality: Barbara Eberstein shared that she is making Christmas party reservations at St. Matthews and that it's still too early to make reservations for the June picnic.

Treasurer: Joan Walker gave a brief report since it will be posted in the February newsletter. (Editor's note: The report didn't make it into the newsletter because the statement was delayed due to snow storm.)

Field Trips: Karen Anadol announced that the Philadelphia Flower Show will be held on March 1, 2010 and the cost will be \$50.

Garden Tours: Kent Winterson said that no one has signed up yet.

Newsletter: Send articles to Don Sminkey. The deadline is the 8th of each month.

Sunshine: Barb Eberstein shared that Hans Hirschmann had been ill, but is doing very well.

Jesse asked if we should reserve the Community Center for the October meeting so we can have Halloween treats since eating is allowed at the Community Center but not at City Hall. Everyone thought that was a good idea and Jesse will pursue this.

Phyllis LaBorwitt said that she was very appreciative that the Garden Club allowed the Master Gardeners to borrow the club's canopy for the Farmer's Market booth.

Plant Sale: Gaye Williams reminded everyone to think about their preparation for the plant sale and what you will bring. Start planting early and be sure that the plant is healthy before it's sold at the plant sale. It was voted upon and approved that Bowie CLAW will be represented at the plant sale and they will have a jar to collect money but CLAW will not be permitted to sell items. Gaye will contact the Lions Club to see if they will offer a rain barrel to be raffled off at the plant sale.

Janelle Dietrich invited BCGC members to attend a Bowie Gardens for Wildlife Habitat workshop to be held on February 8, 2010 at St. Matthew's. The focus is to have at least 200 homes certified to be a National Wildlife Federation certified garden. The Habitat team may be reached at bowiegardens4wildlife@gmail.com

Jesse asked for a volunteer to serve as Plant Exchange Chair for the evening. Kathleen Beres volunteered. Two door prizes were awarded and the winners were Dorothy Bice and Rich Dodson. Other plants and garden items were available for the taking.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted, Kathleen Beres, Secretary

Membership

Don Sminkey is maintaining the membership database, and Brian Swetnam is now the new V.P. for Membership. All changes to the membership list should be sent to Don at gardener@bcgardenclub with a copy to Brian at bswetnam@live.com. Here are the latest membership statistics, including the new members: Total families with paid dues for 2009--2010: 82. Of these 82 families, there are 26 spouses for a total membership of 108.

Treasurer's Report

February 2010

By *Joan Walker*

Report will appear next month.

Plant Sale

By *Gaye Williams*

This is a first reminder about our annual plant sale being held on Saturday, April 24, 2010, in front of the Bowie library from 8am to 12 noon. We expect to have woody plants, perennials, hanging baskets and more. Plants grown by club members are an important part of this sale, so start thinking about what you can bring. The quality and types of plant material we offer are what maintain our sale's reputation. So they should be well-rooted, correctly labeled, and an asset to the garden. In other words, plants that you, yourself, might use. Please check out the abundance of information that's available on invasive and other bully plants to avoid bringing such items for an unsuspecting public. Thanks for your support!

Maryland Master Gardener

Submitted by *Kathleen Beres*

The University of Maryland Extension Master Gardeners are volunteer horticultural educators whose mission is to educate Maryland residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes and communities.

Classes are held every spring and fall in the evenings from 6:00 pm until 9:30 pm.

Next Class:

When: Mondays and Wednesdays, March 1, 2010 to May 6, 2010

Where: 4-H Center in College Park, Maryland

Cost: \$200 for Prince George's County residents

Registration: Contact Esther Mitchell, Master Gardener Coordinator, 301-868-8781, estherm@umd.edu, <http://www.mastergardener.umd.edu>

Late Winter Pruning

by *P. Allen Smith*, Contributed by *Rich Dodson*



In a recent online column, P. Allen Smith pointed out the benefits derived from late winter pruning. The first thing everyone should know about pruning is that, much like a bad haircut, a botched pruning job will grow out eventually. It's unlikely that a person will kill a plant with poor pruning. It may look bad for a while, but it won't die.

The chances of getting the job done right are improved if you use good, sharp tools, make a clean cut and consider the growth habit of the plant. You can't go wrong by just removing dead wood, crisscrossing branches and by limiting the removal to 1/3 of the plant's size.

Why Prune?

The most obvious reasons to prune are to reduce the size of a plant, maintain a plant's shape, or improve its appearance. Pruning to remove dead and diseased wood or thin out the center branches will also help keep a plant healthy. For instance, shrub roses or hydrangeas that have grown too dense benefit from the removal of interior branches to open up air circulation; good air circulation helps keep diseases in check.

Why Prune in Late Winter

Pruning in late winter when many shrubs and trees are dormant invigorates the plants for abundant growth in spring; the wounds are exposed for a limited amount of time before the growing cycle begins; and finally, it's just easier to see what needs to be pruned after the leaves have dropped.

When is Late Winter?

In our area (USDA Zone 7a) late winter is late February or early March. The garden is still dormant, but the spring thaw begins in four to six weeks. The job should be handled before new spring growth begins, but after the threat of severe cold has passed.

What to Prune in Late Winter

Here is a short list of plants that appreciate a good trim in late winter:

Summer Flowering Trees – Ornamental trees that bloom in summer such as Crape Myrtles, Vitex, Smoke Tree, and Rose of Sharon.

Hydrangea paniculata and H. arborescens – Unlike their cousin *H. macrophylla*, these two hydrangeas bloom on new wood so cut them back hard to promote growth and flowers. *H. paniculata* can be cut back to two buds above the base of the flower stem. Prune *H. arborescens* back to varying heights of 1 to 3 feet from the ground.

Fruit Trees – Fruit trees flower on growth from the previous season, but pruning should be done when the tree is dormant, so there will be some flower and fruit loss. The good news is that pruning promotes vigorous growth and larger, better tasting fruits. Each type of fruit tree has some special requirements so do some research before you begin cutting.

Roses - Hybrid tea, old-fashioned and climbing roses should be pruned right before the leaf buds break or if you live in a northern region, pruning should be done when you remove winter protection.

What NOT to Prune in Late Winter

Not all plants should be cut back in winter. This is a list of plants that prefer pruning in late spring or summer:

Spring Flowering Shrubs – Forsythia, quince, azaleas, bridal wreath spirea and other shrubs that bloom in spring should be pruned immediately after they flower.

Spring Flowering Trees – Lilacs, ornamental fruit trees

Hydrangea macrophylla – Old fashioned, pompon hydrangeas set bloom buds on the previous year's growth. It's safe to remove faded flowers and dead branches, but save any major pruning for after the bloom cycle.

Once Blooming Roses – Old-fashioned roses that only flower once each growing season, such as Damasks and Mosses bloom on old wood and should be pruned in the summer after they have flowered.

Gardenias – These should be pruned immediately after they bloom.

Bleeding Trees – Maples, birches, dogwoods, walnuts and elms produce copious amounts of sap when they are pruned in late winter. Pruning won't hurt the trees, but it will be less messy if you wait until summer.

Essential Tools

Going back to the hair cut analogy, it is safe to assume that most of us wouldn't want to have our hair cut with a pair of rusty pinking shears. The same is true of pruning. The best results come from using sharp, clean tools that are suited for the task. Here is a list of pruning essentials.

Sharp pocketknife is great for making small cuts as needed.

Hedge shears are designed to cut small twigs or shrubs, but not anything much larger than the size of a

pencil. They are a must for broadleaf evergreens such as boxwoods, hollies and yews.

By-pass pruners are suited good for cuts about the size a pencil and can be used for perennials and shrubs with thin stems like roses or azaleas.

Loppers are a tool for making big bites when you need to get some leverage. They are best for using on dead wood because they tend to crush rather than cut. This crushing action can damage living cells in a branch, which could cause a longer healing time for the tree or shrub.

Saws are ideal for large branches and can for cutting living wood. The more teeth on the saw the finer the cut and the easier the healing process will be on the plant.

Pole saws and pole pruners are handy for reaching into large shrubs or for working overhead.

Good Advice: When to Call in a Professional. If you can't reach a limb from the ground with a pole pruner, it's time to call a pro. This also applies if the limbs are heavier than you can manage or if the tree is near power lines.

Danger From Frost

Most tender annuals cannot be safely planted outdoors until all danger of frost has passed. Once you know your "last frost date" count backwards, using the chart below, to determine the best time to sow your seeds.

Impatiens	6 to 10 weeks	Tomatoes	5 to 7 weeks
Petunias	7 to 9 weeks	Peppers	7 to 10 weeks
Geraniums	10 to 12 weeks	Eggplant	6 to 9 weeks
Marigolds	5 to 7 weeks	Cabbage *	5 to 7 weeks
Begonias	12 to 14 weeks	Broccoli *	5 to 7 weeks
Coleus	6 to 8 weeks	Cauliflower *	4 to 8 weeks

*Cruciferous crop. These crops should be planted much earlier, providing they are carefully hardened off. This process involves gradually exposing tender seedlings to the harsher outdoor environment by leaving them out for longer and longer periods over the course of several weeks.

Gardening Definitions

Annual – Any plant that dies before blooming (See Perennial)

Autumn – Delightful season that runs from the disposal of the last zucchini to the arrival of the first gardening catalog.

Furrow – Horizontal line on forehead of gardener. (See Harrowing).

Hardy – A plant is said to be hardy if it remains alive in the nursery long enough to be sold.

Harrowing – Type of gardening experience that produces furrows.

Perennial – Any plant which, had it lived, would have bloomed year after year.

Kudzu – Extraordinarily fast-growing vine accidentally introduced into the U.S. probably from China. There are the inevitable stories of kudzu plants growing in through open windows and suddenly grasping the unwary, but they must be apocryphal. No plant could possibly aaaaagh.... no....no

How to Use Lime

Contributed by *Rich Dodson*

ADDING LIME TO INCREASE pH

Lime can be added at any time of year but it does need time to take effect — which is why the autumn, winter and early spring are the preferred times. Hydrated lime may take effect in two or three months but ground chalk or limestone may take up to six months.

The amount of lime needed to raise a spade's depth of top soil by 1pH varies from 5½oz of hydrated lime or 7½oz ground limestone on sandy soil to 11oz of hydrated lime or 15oz ground limestone on heavy clays or peaty soils per square yard. So do not expect pH correction to be too precise!

Avoid adding lime at the same time as sulfate of ammonia, superphosphate, basic slag or animal manures. Lime may be used in combination with sulfate of potash or muriate of potash.

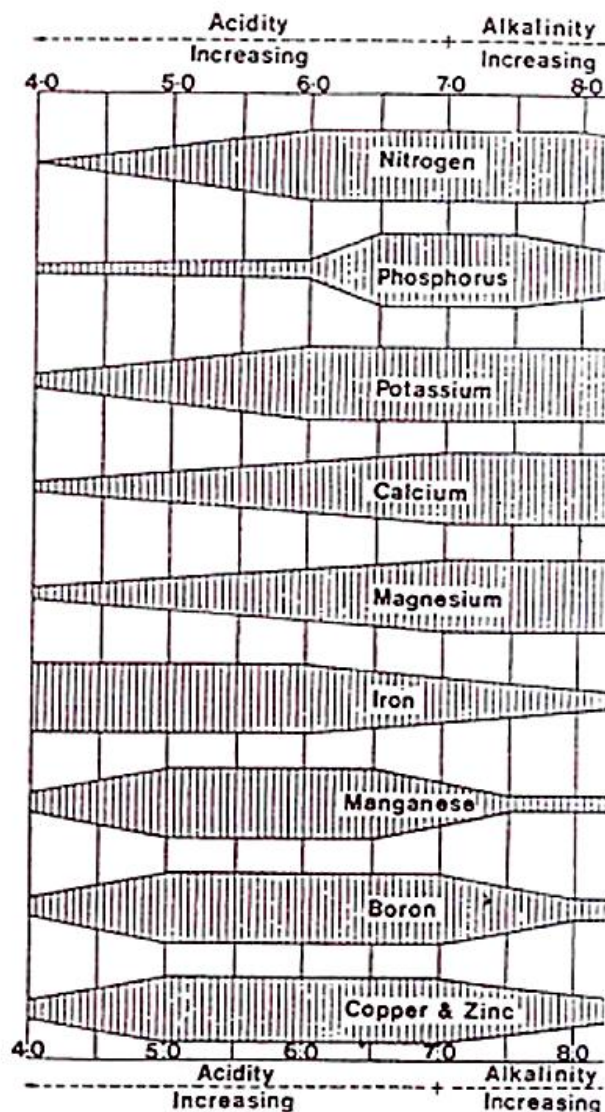
It is because of the natural drop in pH that there is such an emphasis on adding lime. But it is equally important to lower pH if plants are growing outside their tolerances and, while lime stimulates the availability of most plant foods, you will see from the 'pH and Plant Nutrient' table that soils should not automatically be limed because large amounts of plant food become increasingly 'locked up' over pH7.

Benefits of Liming

Here are some of the effects of adding lime:

- Reduces acidity, increases pH.
 - Binds the fine particles of clay into larger particles and so helps aerate and drain the soil.
 - Helps to retain moisture and plant foods in sandy soils.
 - Balances the addition of acidic fertilizers; nitro-chalk is an example.
 - The lime content of soil will sometimes affect flower and foliage color. Blue and red hydrangea flowers are the most common examples.
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- Supplies the plant food calcium.
 - Makes nitrogen available by stimulating the micro-organisms that help decompose organic matter.
 - Increases the earthworm population — so you want to keep your lawn around pH6 - 6.5.
 - Protects against a few diseases, such as club root in brassicas (but causes scab in potatoes) and is disliked by some pests, slugs, leather jackets and wireworms, for example.

pH AND PLANT NUTRIENTS



TYPES OF LIME

The three main types of lime are ground limestone, hydrated lime and burnt lime. Ground limestone is slower acting but more pleasant to handle. Burnt lime must be handled carefully but is quickest acting — one part burnt lime matches 1½ parts of hydrated and 2 parts ground limestone.

How much to apply depends on the particle size of your soil — a sandy soil needs less lime for an equivalent pH change than a heavy clay but will not hold its pH as long.

Executive Committee			From the Editor Donald Sminkey All members of the Garden Club are welcome to write an article on a gardening-related subject. Please send via e-mail to: gardener@bcgardenclub.org. Include "B-CGC" or "Garden Club" in the subject heading; or mail to: Donald Sminkey, 508 Otway Road, Wake Forest, NC 27587 Deadline, March issue: Mar. 8, 2010
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