

La Plata Community Garden Club
THE LATEST DIRT NEWSLETTER
August 2005

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The “hot, lazy, hazy “ days of summer have a whole new meaning to all of us after this July. I am looking forward to a cool Fall - although I can hardly believe that it is August already. The time flies by so quickly, especially when we have so many great garden club programs. The visit to Smallwood's Retreat and Herb Garden was so educational – I never knew we had such a quaint, interesting little place so close to home. Our tour guides, Hilda and Martha Ann, invited our members to join them on any 2nd Saturday of the month (Mar/Apr-Oct) at 8:30 to assist with the maintenance of the gardens.

I would like to thank Melissa Leitner for handling the distribution of the 11 crates of bulbs donated to our Club by David Littlejohn. David continues to be our greatest supporter and is very generous to our members. If you should run into him, please thank him again for always remembering us.

Hope to see everyone on 25 August at 7 PM at the Spring Dell Center for “The Language of Flowers” presentation.

Happy Gardening !!

Sharyn

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Minutes of Monthly Meeting Held, July 28, 2005

President Sharyn Suiter opened the meeting at the conclusion of our visit to the Herb Garden, General Smallwood's House and the English Barn at Smallwood State Park.

Minutes were accepted as published in the monthly newsletter.

Old Business

Melissa Leitner reported that the club made \$350.00 in donations from the enormous amount of lily bulbs that David Littlejohn donated to our club. A very special thank you to Dave for his generosity to us. Also, a thank you to Melissa for accepting the bulbs and letting all the members know about the donation.

Mary Beth Chandler reported that the water and sewer had not been installed at the Old Firehouse. I talked to Mary Beth this afternoon, August 11th and she told me that they did start on the water and sewer lines this morning but did not give Mary Beth or Sherie a

completion date. Until this is done the Star Garden Project cannot move forward.

New Business

President Suiter reported that we have been asked, by District II of the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, Inc. to donate a basket to be raffled off at the State Meeting to be held at Martins West this coming March, 2006. Sharyn asked all of us to come up with some interesting ideas for a really neat basket to represent our Garden Club. We can also include a bottle or two of wine to the basket to make it more interesting.

Mary Beth Chandler introduced Lyndee Tomlinson from The Spring Dell Center. Lyndee is temporarily taking over Lori Lange's position at the Center. We look forward to working with Lyndee and we hope that she will consider joining our Garden Club.

The Business Meeting was adjourned and Barbara Buchanan, and her Committee served refreshments. Great Job! Everyone really enjoyed the delicious variety of foods.

Minutes taken by Jane Grove for Angela Booker, Recording Secretary

Pictures by Marge taken at Smallwood Retreat. Thanks Marge!



Treasurer's Report for the period 07/11/2005 – 08/08/2005

Balance from previous month	2169.04
Income	
Donations from sale of lilies	+350.00
Expenses	
Spring Dell Center (newsletters)	-34.00
Bank Service Charges for April, 2005 (not previously deducted)	-9.28
Bank Service Charges for May, 2005	-6.69
Current Balance	2469.07

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Bird Committee

The Goldfinch

Firstly, a comical sight I witnessed recently. I saw something moving in the underbrush at the bottom of our backyard and waited to see if anything would emerge. Sure enough a beautiful grey fox appeared and proceeded to eat some of the cracked corn that we routinely put out for the squirrels. I would not have believed that a fox would eat cracked corn unless I had seen it for myself. Perhaps he had already eaten up the bunnies in the neighborhood? Also we have been visited by Rusty Blackbirds. These are blackbirds that have a slight rusty color to the black of their feathers.

Goldfinches are now revisiting our yard now that black-eyed susans and sunflowers are blooming. They seem to gravitate towards yellow flowers being mostly yellow themselves. They prefer thistle seed (also known as nyjer) or sunflower seeds, so can be lured to your backyard in the winter if these are made available to them. In the summertime, I love to see the splash of yellow color as they move from flower to flower but, of course, the males turn to a rather drab olive-brown color in the winter, so then they look a lot like the females, although they, too, brighten up a little when spring arrives.

Breeding season is put on hold until late summer when thistle goes to seed. Then the birds collect the down to line their nests, which are so tightly woven that they actually hold water! The adults raise four to six young entirely on seed, feeding them a partially digested substance commonly called "canary milk". As you would imagine, this is very unusual in the bird world because most nestlings, even if they grow up to be seedeaters, are raised on insects. They are also partial to the seeds of liatris, zinnias, cosmos, bee balm and coreopsis and so make a lovely splash of added color amongst the blooms in the

summer garden.

Goldfinches are nearly always in flocks. By winter, the flocks may grow to 100 birds or more, making the perches on your feeders a popular spot.

Keep the thistle feeder full and enjoy them now and again in the wintertime

Gloria Groeger, Bird Chairman

Conservation Committee

Building a House (Maybe!) in the Critical Area

Third article in a series. SYNOPSIS - I applied for a permit to build a home inside the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area (within 1000 ft of the bay or a tributary.) The state Dept of Natural Resources expressed concern because records indicated as many as 11 different rare/threatened/endangered plant or animal species could be living within the boundaries of the proposed building site. As a result the county requested a habitat study be conducted.

This study was conducted by a local engineering and site development firm. The purpose was to assess the possibility of the 11 endangered species being present on the lot. The study involved three things - 1) field assessment of the physical nature and topography of the lot including existing flora and fauna, 2) review of the 11 species and their various habitat requirements, and 3) conclusions about their possible presence on the lot.

By the way the 11 species were American Lotus, Glade Fern, Hitchcock's Sedge, Mosquito Fern, Large-seeded Forget-me-not, Small-flowered Baby-blue-eyes, Virginia Heart-leaf, Single-headed Pussytoes, Primrose Willow, Pale Green Orchid, and the Cylindrically-ornate Wood Snail.

The habitat study had some bad news and some good news. The bad news - it was possible that all 11 species existed on my building lot! The good news - there were four distinctly different "eco-zones" that existed on the lot (remember it was 1200 feet long, with a stream, and sloped down to the water from a wooded highland), and only 2 of the species might actually live in the area of the proposed building site -the wooded highland eco-zone.

But only one endangered species was required to possibly terminate my plans to build within the Critical Area. I was comforted by the fact that I was entitled to "one development right" inside the Critical Area. The staff employees at the county offices had pointed that out to me several times. It also said that right in the counties zoning ordinance (for lots recorded prior to December, 1985). I was in very good shape there because my lot had been duly recorded in 1918! However, I was also informed that when an endangered species was present, "all bets were off." It was enough to worry a man, and one of those 2 candidate species - Hitchcock's Sedge - would prove to cost me more

than worry! Stay Tuned. Next article - FIDS (Forest Interior Dwelling Birds - another potential show stopper).

Jeff Foster, Member, Conservation Committee

Ways and Means Committee

- **Thank you** - We would like send a special thank you to Melissa Leitner for coordinating the Dave Littlejohn Bulb distribution. It is always a pleasure to be on the receiving end of one of Dave's bulb give aways. He never asks for anything, only that we make a donation to our club. As a result we collected over \$350! Thanks again Melissa for all your hard work.
- **Spring Garden Tea** – We are anxious to get everyone's ideas and bring together a plan for our Spring Garden Tea. I would like to have a planning meeting on Sunday, August 21st at 10:00 at my house. Directions to Barbara Buchanan's house: From Rt 301 & Rt 6. Go West on Rt 6 toward Port Tobacco and make a Right on Quailwood Parkway. Then turn Right on East Quail (First Right) then take second Left onto Pheasant Lane. First house on the Right, (yellow house on the corner), 20 Pheasant Lane. If you have any question, please call me in the evenings at (301) 934-4114. See you there.

Barbara Buchanan and Melissa Leitner, Chairpersons

Note from Barbara: I would like to send a special thank you to my Food Committee, everything was great. Each of you was very eager to pitch in and bring items and it all fell together beautifully. It was obvious that your efforts were enjoyed by all!

My husband and I really enjoyed the entire evening and the opportunity to view the herb garden. What a great opportunity to see how gardeners of old not only used their plantings in their meals and also made a beautiful accent to their properties.

Thanks again, Barbara Buchanan

Also for those who wanted the recipe for the meatballs here it is:

- * One large can of Campbell's Mushroom Soup (or three small)
- * One packet of Lipton's Onion Soup Mix
- * Add water

Bring the above items to a boil stirring occasionally. I used almost a full can of water. It should be like gravy when you're done.

- * Add your meatballs. Cook till hot and serve.

I use a frozen pack of meat balls (not sure of the brand name), I have used several different kinds and they all work well.

DO NOT PUT your meatballs in before heating up the sauce, some people have had the meatballs turn to mush.

One more thing: They are also great served over noodles!

NOTES FROM YOUR EDITOR

We had such a lovely evening to tour the Herb Garden, General Smallwood's House and the English Barn. The weather was perfect and one of the few nights in July that the humidity was gone. Special thanks to Hilda Herbert and Martha Ann McKean for their talk about the garden and how important it was to the early settlers in this country. Hilda and Martha explained the various herbs in the garden and told us to come back if we get the chance to see the beautiful tulips in full bloom next spring. A very special thanks to Nancy Gill, Docent, from the Friends of Smallwood Park, for her educational tour of General Smallwood's house. Nancy used her own time to come, in costume, and be our guide. After our tour we had a very brief business meeting and followed up with the delicious foods provided by Barbara Buchanan and her host committee. Terrific job ladies! For those of you who were not able to attend the meeting, Barbara's recipe for the meatballs is included with her report in this newsletter.

Our Congratulations and very Best Wishes to Cheri Burch and Jerry Baker on their marriage on August 6, 2005! May you have a long and happy marriage!

It is hard to imagine that Summer is almost gone. Everywhere you look you see plantings for the Fall. Now is the time to pick out the best flowers, etc. to make your fall gardens look spectacular. If you want to see beautiful flowers, and are online, look at Brent and Becky's Bulbs. Their website is: www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com. Brent gave a talk and slide presentation to the District II Meeting of the Federated Gardens Club of Maryland, Inc. in March of this year and his flowers are gorgeous. They have a catalog and you can request one on their website. For those of us who find it difficult to walk thru the different garden centers, the internet has many reputable nursery sites. Take a look – you might be surprised to find something new.

Jane Grove, Editor

OUR NEXT MEETING

Date/Time: August 25, 2005 7PM

Program: The Language of Flowers

Presenter: Mary Crother

Location: Spring Dell Center, 6040 Radio Station Road, La Plata, MD

Coordinator: Joyce Rose

Host Committee: Mike Rose, Chris & Gary Stefanides, Jeff Foster, Sherran Myers