

Takoma Horticultural Club

A hardy perennial since 1916



September 2017

Annual Summer Potluck

The Takoma Horticultural Club annual potluck will be held this year in Taffy Turner's beautifully groomed garden from **4 to 7 p.m. on Sunday, September 17**. Back in 2002, one of the organizers of the Club's "Spring Garden Tour," wrote that (in 11 years and with 63 varieties of hosta), Taffy had "achieved that difficult combination of great design and a great collection." It's a lovely place to be on a summer afternoon.

This is a "Members only" event. Please RSVP to Membership Chair Carole Galati (cagalati@rcn.com) and she will let you know if you're not the Member you think you are. You may join the club at this event. Find the form on our website: www.takomahort.org.

The Club will provide chicken and beverages as usual, and everyone is asked to bring a contribution, whether it be appetizer, side dish, salad, or dessert. Wine, beer, and soft drinks are also welcome.



Taffy's lovely garden—the perfect place for a September potluck.

We're continuing the recent tradition of informal "Garden Exchange;" if you want to participate, bring something you think a fellow-gardener might appreciate, whether a plant, book, pot, tool or gnome from home. Numbers will be drawn to see who goes away with what.

The address, in the Four Corners area, is 10207 Lorain Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20901, 301-681-9133 (H). Going west on University Boulevard, cross Colesville Road and take the 2nd right on Lorain. Going north on Colesville, cross University and Lorain is the second left turn.

2017 THC Executive Committee

President: Katherine Lambert

Vice President: Barbara Henderson

Treasurer: Taffy Turner

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Listserv: Anne Hardman

Newsletter: Eileen Schramm, Diane Svenonius

Bulb Sale: Wendy Bell, Barbara Henderson

It happened in August...

Carol Allen gave a detailed and lively talk on the 16th on how to get properly potted. Surrounded by examples of all matter of planting media, she took the audience at Historic Takoma through intelligent label-reading and the physics and biology of potting.

The idea is to achieve a "substrate" that will allow water to pass through the pot without compressing the pockets of air that allow the roots to engage in gas exchange. Carol started with the traditional commercial potting choice, peat moss. Compared to other, often less expensive substances, peat moss (partially decomposed sphagnum peat mined in Michigan and Canada) has the highest fiber content (resists packing) and is the slowest to break down into smaller packable particles, retaining porosity for a long time. The best potting mixes have peat first on the label, with 2/3 or 3/4 fiber content. She recommends avoiding mixes in which hypnum peat, reed sedge, or peat humus is "first on the label." (The down side: sphagnum peat comes from bogs which are being heavily mined and is not a renewable resource.)

All organic matter will compost and compress in time. To postpone the inevitable and keep air spaces there are a number of things you can add. She handed around samples of them: rice hulls, perlite, vermiculite (which can offset peat's acidity), coir etc. For larger containers, she mainly uses pine fines, small pieces of pine

bark, generously mixed with her potting mix. It is high in lignin and resists compaction. (It too is non-renewable.)

To avoid over-watering, Carol stressed adopting one substrate for your potted plants so you can recognize at a glance or a touch when it is completely dry...it has a typical color, or feels dry to your fingers below the surface. In a plastic pot, light weight can be the sign. Then water the plant from the top and let it drain completely.

Some other tips:

- ✿ Don't layer different components; rather mix them thoroughly so that the water goes through to the bottom.
- ✿ Skip the little pot shard or layer of gravel over the hole...the soil will stay in the pot.
- ✿ Change soil annually because of mineral salts in our water supply
- ✿ Roots wound around the outside of the pot are seeking oxygen. (Since roots don't photosynthesize, they don't need carbon dioxide) When repotting, with your fingers, you can "fuzz" some (not all) of the tiny root ends around the root ball (don't disturb the center of the ball) to revive them.
- ✿ As the plant grows, repot in an only slightly larger pot so the roots don't have far to go to reach the oxygen-rich edge.

—Diane Svenonius

Early Fall events

For Urban Gardeners

Montgomery County Master Gardeners continue to share information and give away plants this summer at the "Urban Gardening" demos on Veterans Plaza in Silver Spring.

Remaining on the 2017 calendar:

September 2, 9 am to 1 pm on the Plaza:

"Caring for House Plants over the Winter"

October 14, Silver Spring Library from 10:30 to 3 pm:

"Fall Cleanup and Composting"; "Spring Bulbs"; and "House Plants". Pick up free daffodil bulbs and lots of good information!

Annual Plant Sale

Friends of Brookside Gardens' Annual Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, September 9 and Sunday, September 10.

FOBG members get 10% discount both days; join at the event!

Saturday, 8 – 10 am: preview sale for members only;
10 am – 3 pm: general public.

Sunday, 9 am – noon: open to all.

See lists of plants at: friendsofbrooksidegardens.org/plants_2017

Fall + Membership = Great Events!

August is a surprising busy time for us gardeners. It's a good time to think about cleaning up our gardens and planting our new treasures. The wonderful Plant Sale at Brookside Gardens is coming soon: September 9 and 10. Now is also a great time to check on your Takoma Horticultural Club membership status. Members in good standing can enjoy the highlight of our summer season: our annual Summer Potluck on Sunday, September 17. This very popular club event is being held at Taffy Turner's gorgeously cool garden in Silver Spring.

In October there are two good reasons to be a club member. You can get a 10% bulb discount at the Takoma Park Street Festival. Look for our "bulb tent" on October 1st. This bulb sale on October 1st is our only fund raiser, but it's our membership dues that sustain our club. Your dues pay for speakers, secure our wonderful Historic Takoma venue and help subsidize our club donations and activities. We also have our Fall Plant Exchange on Sunday, October 15. As you clean up your fall garden, it's the best time to think about potting up those extra, prolific plants you have been nurturing all season. They will bring smiles to all of us who love to share our gardens at the Plant Exchange.

Please welcome our latest new and returning members: Paula Chiplis, Sara Stone and Catherine Quinn. If I forgot to include you, please let me know. Be sure to refer to our website: www.takomahort.org. Here you will learn about our latest activities and club history, find great gardening links and view our monthly newsletter.

—Carole Galati (cagalati@rcn.com)