



TAKOMA HORTICULTURAL CLUB NEWS

January, 2010 Edition

www.takomahort.org



HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

SAVE THESE 2010 DATES

February 17

Designing Gardens Using Native Plants:

Carla Thomas

March 17

Paths, Plants and Punctuation: The

Artistry of Garden Design: John
Gordon

2010 Dues News

'Tis the Season to pay dues! We have 65 members who are already paid up for 2010, including 28 Life Time Members; 105 paid 2009 dues and need to renew for 2010. Since about half our club events will be for "Members Only," now is the best time to pay your dues ~ \$12. Check our website for details: www.takomahort.org It is going to be a great year for THC! **Watch for the 2010 program to be posted around January 10 on the website.** Check with me for your current dues status if you are not sure. Also, please let me know if you changed your email address in 2009. (*Dues, p.2*)

January Club Event

Member Pot Luck and Indoor Plant Exchange

*Save January 20 for Takoma Hort's
Legendary Members Only Potluck
And Indoor Plant Exchange.*

Please make plans to join your fellow Takoma Horticulture Club members for our Potluck & Indoor Plant Exchange on Wednesday, January 20, 2009 at Heffner Park, 42 Oswego Ave in Takoma Park. Join us around 6:30 PM for appetizers and chat and we will have dinner around 7pm.

If you joined us last year, you remember what a great time we had and what wonderful cooks we all are! Now is the time to start thinking about the yummy treat you plan to bring this year. No need to coordinate the food offerings, it will all work out! As usual, the club will provide beverages. Heffner has a kitchen with a sink, a microwave and a cook top but no oven, so if you need to heat up your dish, think about whether the pan can (*see Potluck, next page*).

(*Potluck, cont'd*) fit in the microwave or be heated on a burner.

Following dinner will be our Indoor Plant Exchange. Bring an indoor plant if you have one you're willing to part with, otherwise, how about those great garden catalogs that have begun to arrive? Or, bring extra garden tools, gloves, pots, books, magazines to share with fellow gardeners.

Be prepared to give the group a little description of your treasure. If you bring something, you'll go home with something!

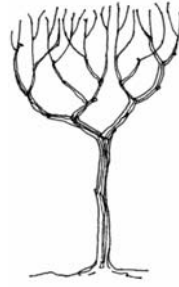
Remember to protect your plants from the cold while transporting them. The exchange has always been a fun evening and a great opportunity to get to know each other and meet new members in a relaxed setting.

Questions, or to volunteer, contact Anne Hardman at 301-434-5647, or better yet, email anne.hardman@gmail.com

(*Dues, cont'd*) will be emailing your membership card, along with some club discounts at local garden-related businesses. You can send along your current email address with your dues check. Hope you had a wonderful holiday season and are looking forward to our great Winter Potluck & Plant Exchange on January 20. And welcome to Cynthia Mills, our newest member.

Thanks,
Carole (cagalati@rcn.com)

Contributions and comments on the newsletter are welcome. Have a topic or event you'd like to share with THC News readers? Send to the editor at dbsvenonius@msn.com



Winter Gardening—in a Snifter

"Your daughters, perhaps, have been seized with the prevailing 'Pteridomania', and are collecting and buying ferns, with Ward's cases wherein to keep them... and wrangling over unpronounceable names of species (which seem different in each new Fern-book that they buy...): and yet you cannot deny that they find enjoyment in it, and are more active, more cheerful, more self-forgetful over it, than they would have been over novels and gossip, crochet and Berlin-wool." Charles Kingsley, *Glaucus*, 1855

The "Wardian case" or terrarium may be due for another heyday in the coming decade. In winter, when we're exhorted to avoid tramping around in the wet soil, the violent urge to garden might be appeased by getting out bell jars, chopsticks and misters to make a landscape inside glass in the spirit of the 19th century.

In 1827, Dr. Nathaniel Ward noticed that healthy small ferns grew under the glass covers he used for the protection and study of moth cocoons, while his potted ferns typically died in the coal-fire-polluted London air. He built small enclosed glass "fern cases", which became known by his name. Used by horticulturalists and commercial growers, they revolutionized commercial horticulture by making it possible to transport living plants, not merely seeds or rhizomes, on long sea voyages. Agriculture was globalized, with tea plants smuggled from China to India, and rubber seedlings sent from Brazil to create plantations in Malaya. Ferns did particularly well in the case's humid atmosphere and in indoor light. Elaborately decorated cases became a popular pastime, combining luxury, beauty and scientific curiosity in Victorian (see *Winter Gardening*, p. 3)

(Winter Gardening, continued)

homes, and giving rise to “pteridomania”. A mania for orchids followed soon after.

The best plants for an enclosed container are those that like humidity, don’t require more sun than can be provided by a window, and don’t grow too fast or too big. The container can be placed in bright indirect light or fluorescent bulbs. Succulents are popular container plants, but will need five or more hours of sunlight a day and a completely closed container will be too humid for them.

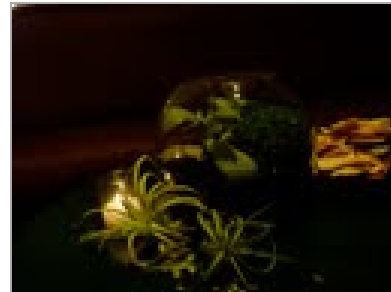
Most guidance on terrariums recommends:

- ¾ to 1 inch of coarse sand or pebbles on the bottom for good drainage, followed by
- a layer of activated (planting or aquarium) charcoal to keep the air fresh and sweet, especially for a closed container;
- a thin layer of sphagnum moss to keep the soil from drifting down. Then comes
- a few inches of potting soil, which can be leavened with builder’s sand or perlite if it is heavy.

The seeds or plants are placed in the soil with your hands (or inserted in a narrow-mouthed container with wooden tongs or a cone of paper.) The plants are arranged as you would a bed or a flower arrangement. Will it be viewed from all sides? What colors and heights will make an elegant, or a charming, arrangement? In a container with a narrow neck, experts recommend that you draw the design before beginning, since you will be inserting plants with a long implement and it won’t be easy to move them. After the plants are in you can decorate further with interesting twigs, pebbles, or other objects.

Closed terrariums take special attention to make sure that the environment is self-sustaining, not too wet, dry or hot. On the internet and in the library there are many lists of suitable plants, artistic photos, and sources of advice for keeping terrariums pretty and healthy. For example, <http://www.thegardenhelper.com/terrarium~plants.html> or <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/>

[DisplayPub.aspx?P=g6520](#) A new book with appealing photos is *The New Terrarium: Creating Beautiful Displays for Plants and Nature*, by Tovah Martin. And you can watch Martha Stewart build a garden of succulents in a cylindrical vase at <http://www.marthastewart.com/article/succulents-terrariums?inc=38f9cf380e1dd010VgnVCM100005b09a00aRCRD>.



Spherical container with tillandsia, an air plant.

THC Makes Library Donations

As in previous years, the Takoma Horticultural Club has donated some of the funds from the successful bulb sale to purchase books on gardening for two local libraries, the Takoma Park City Library and the District of Columbia Takoma Branch library. Books are being selected by the libraries, based on their current needs. When the books have been chosen and accessioned, they will be shelved with the THC bookplate and listed on takomahort.org.

The club has been making donations of books for some years to the Takoma Park City library, which now has a strong collection of gardening volumes. Holdings can be viewed on line at: <http://www.cityoftakomapark.org/library>

Illustrations in this issue: Hens and Chicks in Frost, NY Botanical Garden; Drawings, p 2 & 4, Tim Svenonius; Terrarium photos and designs, Jennifer Mizel; Conifer photo, US National Arboretum web site.

Gardening Events of Interest in the Community

Brookside Gardens

January 16 through April 11, 2010

Spring Display: Spring Zing

10:00am-5:00pm daily

Visit a place apart and enjoy a world of color and fragrance in the Spring Conservatory. Many tropical plants flower early in the season like the Birds of Paradise, *Strelitzia nicolai*, and *S. reginae*; Indian Hawthorn, *Rhaphiolepis indica*; Begonias, Bromeliads, and orchids.

5th Annual Seed Exchange, sponsored by *Washington Gardener Magazine*

January 30, 12:00-4:00pm

Visitor Center Auditorium

Washington Gardener Magazine

4th Annual Magazine Photo Contest

Entries are due by **January 22, 2010**.

Time to start sorting and picking out your best 2009 garden shots. A new category has been added this year: "Garden Vignettes": Groupings of plants in beds or containers, unusual color or texture combinations, garden focal points, and still scenes.

See the [PDF](#) at

<http://issuu.com/washingtongardener/docs/wphotocontest> for full details.

National Arboretum



Perfect Conifers for Urban Gardens and Containers
Talk and Tour
January 16,

1:00pm-3:00pm
Fee \$12,

registration at
<http://www.usna>

[.usna.gov/Education/registration.html](http://www.usna.gov/Education/registration.html)

Audubon Naturalist Society

A Year at Boundary Bridge, with
Melanie Choukas Bradley



Join the author of *City of Trees* for the first in a series of hikes in one of Washington, D.C.'s most beautiful wild areas. Starting at Boundary Bridge and following the same 2.5 mile loop trail each season, explore the large trees, diverse shrubs, and exceptional wildflowers along a scenic stretch of Rock Creek, just inside the Maryland/District Line. On the winter walk, an ideal time to admire the Park's topography, look and listen for winter flocks and identify many species of woody plants. Other walks will take place in April, June and November. For registration and fee information see www.audubonnaturalist.org

Green Spring Gardens

4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria

Winter Lecture Series

January 17, *What's New in Woody Plants?* 1:30-3pm. Richard Olsen

January 24 *Wildflowers in Africa: Adventures in Compiling the First Wildflower Guide for Zambia*

1:30-3pm. An adventure with artist, Doreen Bolnick

January 31 *Mysteries of Orchid Pollination* 1:30-3pm. Tom Mirenda, Smithsonian Horticulturalist, demystifies orchid pollination. Admission \$10 each

Homestead Gardens, Davidsonville

January 23, 24 and 30.

Talks on Tools; Composting; Planting for Wildlife; Cool Weather Vegetables; Cold Weather Containers. \$5 each.

www.homesteadgardens.com