



TAKOMA HORTICULTURAL CLUB

www.takomahort.org

July 2010 Newsletter



Planting the Hancock Avenue Garden



All done!

Hancock Avenue Rain Garden Spectacular

The traditional fix to a very eroded ravine was suggested: just pipe that stormwater out of the ravine and into the storm drain so it can go straight to Sligo Creek. To the City of Takoma Park's credit, it said no, that's not a fix! An appropriate solution to the raging storm water at the end of Hancock, just below the hidden little Opal Daniels Park, was a controlled parapet of rocks and plants with a side chute to a large rain garden. With that design, a one inch rain will be diverted to the big 'saucer' of a rain garden to infiltrate the ground, instead of shooting all that silt and any pesticides or fertilizer from the area into Sligo Creek. If the rainfall exceeds one inch then the excess
(continued page 3)

July Club Event: 'Planning and Planting to Save Your Rainwater' Wednesday, July 21, 7:00-8:30pm Open to the Public

Are you interested in gardening in ways that help keep stormwater runoff on your property, instead of running directly into the storm sewer?

Do you want to know more about the implications of unchecked stormwater runoff and mechanisms to control it? Do you want to see some real local examples?

Then come join THC for a tour of several environmentally sustainable installations in the Takoma Park area. Club President Kit Gage and club member Wendy Bell will lead us on the tour and answer questions about how and why you might incorporate these techniques into your own gardens. We will look at the new green roof on city hall; two different pervious paver driveways; an above-ground cistern for collecting larger quantities of rain; several rain gardens, from a small residential size to a large community rain garden; and a conservation landscaping planting.

We'll meet in the parking lot behind the Takoma Park Community Center at 7:00pm to arrange carpools. Please arrive on time to facilitate the car pool! The Takoma Park Community Center is located at the corner of East West Highway (Philadelphia Avenue) and Maple Avenue.

Dreaming of the Tropics...

Looking for something a little different for your garden? You can create a setting worthy of a romantic south sea isle, right in your own back yard! Or side yard, or patio—any place that drains well and is somewhat sheltered from winter wind. With careful choices, you can grow many tropical plants right here in the Washington DC area. Many are hardy here, including several varieties of hardy palm trees that are sold at places such as the local Home Depot and Lowes, as well as at local garden centers. Try either *Rhapidophyllum hystrix*, the Needle Palm or *Trachycarpus fortunei*, the Windmill Palm. Both were readily available this spring. Other good candidates:

--*Fatsia japonica*—has proven an excellent evergreen shrub for this area

--*Musa basjoo*—the hardy Japanese Fiber Banana

--Cannas—in the right place many can overwinter. I had *Canna musifolia*, the banana canna overwinter this year, and it is not supposed to be hardy north of zone 8.

--*Tetrapanax papyrifer*, particularly 'Steroidal Giant'.

--*Colocasias* and *Alocasias*—Elephant ears (most should be dug up before winter)

-- *Zantedeschia*--Calla lily

If in doubt, many of these plants can be overwintered in a dormant state in a cool basement. Many will happily remain outside with some protection.

Remember that many of these plants don't start to grow until the soil is quite warm,

and most are heavy feeders. Many like full sun, but most cannas can take some shade, and the elephant ears are happiest with some shade. Lots of water of course, and really good drainage for most.



Elephant ear leaf emerging. Photo by Anne Hardman

Why not try a few tropicals? They don't have to be expensive—your local Latin or Asian market has roots and tubers which will happily grow into amazing tropical plants, and at \$1.79/lb, your yucca, cassava or manihot (*Manihot esculenta*) can grow into an exotic specimen. Also, you can try common ginger root from the grocery store.

Want to know more? There are several on-line discussion groups, and members meet to swap plants several times a year. The Yahoo group DC Tropics is the group I belong to. You can find them at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/dctropics>

—*Anne Hardman*, willing to try any plant once...

TODAY IS THE DAY WE "CLEAN" THE THC MEMBERSHIP LIST

This means those who have not yet paid their 2010 dues are removed from our list. This might be you! If you are not sure if you have paid your 2010 dues, please contact me: cagalati@rcn.com. But if you want to pay your dues or join the club, please go to our website: www.takomahort.org and follow the instructions. It's all there!

You do not have to fill out a membership form if you are already a member ~

only if you are joining for the first time. There are now 54 people who will be removed from the Membership List because they have not paid their 2010 dues. Don't be left out in the heat (cold?). Stay active and enjoy all the Members-Only benefits ~ including our August 15th Potluck and our Fall Plant Exchange on October 17th! By the way, there are 37 Life Time Members, who have paid \$125 and can ignore my "Pay Your Dues" reminders for the rest of their lives!! Lucky them!!

—*Carole Galati, Membership*



June Club Event

Open Gardens in North Takoma

On a pleasant June morning, THC members enjoyed exploring the grounds and gardens of six North Takoma homes, at the annual Open Garden tour organized this year by Melanie Isis and Kathy Jentz.

The gardens featured everything from tropical palms on Takoma to a butterfly garden on Philadelphia to steeply landscaped terraces and flourishing kitchen gardens. Many thanks to the folks who hosted and talked about their horticultural feats and landscaping choices: Beth Richwine and Randy Cleaver, Wendy Vanasselt and Gregory Mock, Sara and Elza Hisel-McCoy, Jan Goldstein and Steve Teska, and Laura Jones.



SAVE THE DATE!!

**THE ANNUAL MEMBERS' POTLUCK
PICNIC WILL BE FROM 4-7 ON AUGUST
15 AT WENDY BELL'S**

(Hancock Avenue Raingarden, continued)
will go down the spillway, slowed by the stepped rocks that stop the erosion. Design and installation were done by Lauren Wheeler of Natural Resources Design, Inc., the engineering firm ATR Associates, and contractor Environmental Quality Resources (EQR).

On Saturday, June 19th, about 30 of us (mostly from the neighborhood, but also from Friends of Sligo Creek and Takoma Horticultural Club) planted the rain garden with lovely huge serviceberry trees, lots of native shrubs, cardinal flowers, Joe Pye Weed, and others. Scraping the 5 to 10 inches of mulch away to dig into the half-sand soil was a pain, but once at the sandy level, the digging was easy. The diggers ranged from teen-aged to don't-ask-my-agers. It was hot, but water, juice and bagels were plentiful. By morning's end it was planted up and watered. Come fall, we'll use the donations from Friends of Sligo Creek and Takoma Horticultural Club to plant up the edge and put up a sign so people can learn what a fantastic installation this is: curbs pollution, infiltrates rainwater, uses native plants to facilitate plant survival, attracts and supports pollinators, minimizes growth of exotic invasive weeds... and it's a beauty!
___ Kit Gage

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome our new and returning members: Sara Hisel-McCoy, Beth & Eric Anderson, Ginny Bilhimer and Arna Rubman. Rumor has it that one of these people has agreed (in a weak moment?) to host our 2011 Summer Potluck! Thank you!

Green Roofs

When most of us think of a garden, we picture a back or front yard with a verdant landscape. Some, though, picture a world of other possibilities—including green roofs and walls.

In June I attended a large portion of the Washington Regional Green Roofs & Walls Conference and Training here in our nation's capital.

It was an eye-opening and inspirational experience for me as a home gardener. It made me realize the potential to garden in non-traditional ways. It was truly a paradigm shift for me. I no longer look at roofs and walls in the same way as I did before.

So--- why green roofs and walls?

The main reason is that in developed areas—like the DC Metro area—roof, pavement and other impervious surfaces prevent storm water from soaking into the ground. Instead, the water runs over land to small tributaries and larger streams. These water bodies are often unable to handle the runoff so environmental damage results: bank erosion, incised channels, lost animal habitat, lost aquatic life, flooding, and when most of us notice it is when property damage results. Also important to note is that storm water has in it a wide range of toxic chemicals, bacteria, sediments, fertilizers, oil and grease, so it is not what we want to be adding to small tributaries and streams.

Green roofs reduce and clean storm water runoff. They also expand the life of a roof by 2-3 times, reduce utility costs (especially air conditioning), cool urban environments, reduce urban heat island effect, provide habitat for birds and insects, improve air quality and reduce the building's carbon footprint.

Green walls, aside from being aesthetically beautiful (see the Federal government's

green wall jewel in its crown in a Federal building in Portland Oregon*) absorb pollutants and air dust, improve indoor air quality by removing harmful VOCs (volatile organic compounds) like formaldehyde and benzene, help mitigate "sick building" disease, reduce a building's carbon

footprint, act as a sound barrier, cool and insulate the building's envelope while helping to reduce heating and air conditioning costs, increase the life span of the building by protecting it from UV rays and thermal expansion/contraction, and can filter captured rain water and/or neutralize acid rain, and-- in public spaces-- discourage graffiti.

The U.S. government (with the U.S. General Services Administration at the helm) is a

leader in green roofs and green walls. It planted its first green roof in 1975, and thanks to Uncle Sam's leadership Washington, DC is second only to Chicago on the list of top 10 green roof cities. (I was told by a green roof professional that Chicago is one of the greenest cities in America thanks to Mayor Daley's political will and muscle.)

In our own neck of the woods, things are pretty good too. The District of Columbia government publishes the "Green DC Map" which highlights a variety of environmental points of interest throughout the city, including green roofs. Take a look at the map and explore some local green stand-outs. (www.green.dc.gov).

As gardeners, I know you want to know about the plant material. So what is used in green roofs? Most often sedum stonecrop in its seemingly infinite variety: sedum caucium, ellacombianum, floriferum, divergens, hybridum, hispanicum, kamtschaticum, mexicanum, immergrunchen, (*continued next page*)



(*green roofs continued*) kamtschaticum, reflexum, pachyclados, middendorffianum, oreganum, rupestre, and sieboldii to name just a few! But also sempervivum tectorum (house leeks), Thymus praecox (creeping thyme), veronica prostrata (speedwell), delosperma basuticum (Ice plant), cerastium tomentosum (snow-in-summer), armeria maritima (sea thrift), antennaria dioica (pink pussytoes) and many more. The use of moss is also increasing. The benefit of moss is that it has no roots and doesn't take nutrition from the roofing substrate. It is also drought resistant and retains up to 10 times its weight in water. Mosses being used on green roofs include hypnum moss (rock cap moss).

So are green roofs and walls a passing fad or are they here to stay? I think they are here to stay. In 2009, the green roof/wall industry saw a 16.1% rate of growth, despite hard economic times.. For those green/landscaping professionals among us, a message throughout the Conference was that the green roof industry in North America is rapidly expanding, so the need for trained professionals familiar with green roof design, installation and maintenance is increasing. You might want to consider an accreditation program for green roof professionals. One is run by Green Roofs for Healthy Cities (www.greenroofs.org);

completing it will increase your professional green roof bona fides. Even Canada is on the green roof bandwagon. In May 2009 the Toronto City Council voted overwhelmingly to support the adoption of the Toronto Green Roof Bylaw (www.toronto.ca/green-roofs), becoming the first major city in North America to **require** green roofs on new buildings. Impressive, huh?

SO are you now thinking about the possibility of installing a green roof on your property? If you live in Washington, DC the time couldn't be better. The DC government is offering District of Columbia property owners subsidies for green roofs. For more information:

<http://ddoe.dc.gov/ddoe/cwp/view,a,1209,q,499460.asp>. Also, the District of Columbia through its "Riversmart Homes Program" provides incentives for property owners to install permeable pavers, rain barrels, and rain gardens.

(<http://ddoe.dc.gov/ddoe/cwp/view,a,1209,q,497794.asp>) Other local governments may offer similar incentives, so it is worth exploring. At a minimum you could attend this month's THC rain garden tour (see p.1)!

—*Madeline Caliendo*

* <http://www.jetsongreen.com/2010/01/living-wall-portland-federal-building.html>

Events in July

Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens
1550 Anacostia Ave. NE, Washington DC
Lotus and Water Lily Festival

July 17 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

July 18 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

See a spectacular display of lotus and water lilies in full bloom and enjoy free activities for the whole family, including gardening workshops, traditional Asian dancing performances, and tours of the ponds, green houses and wetlands. Exhibitors from gardening, nature and cultural groups will be on hand. 202 426-6905

Red Wiggler Community Farm
Ridge Road, Clarksburg, MD 20871
Annual Farm Tour

July 24, 10:00am-4:00pm

Let's see what's growing on the farm! Music, hayrides, and educational activities.

Through hands-on activities and games we will help you learn about agricultural crops, farming and food.

<http://www.redwiggler.org/events>

The Takoma Hort Club News is published monthly & welcomes contributions & suggestions. Contact editor Diane Svenonius, dbsvonius@msn.com 301 585-1566