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www.mensgardenclubofalbany.com



(Serving the greater capital region)

Celebrating **77** years of service to our community

VOLUME 76 NO. 3

(First Chartered 1936)

April, 2013

April Meeting -

In addition to members and spouses,
Garden and Flower show attendees, friends and spouses invited!

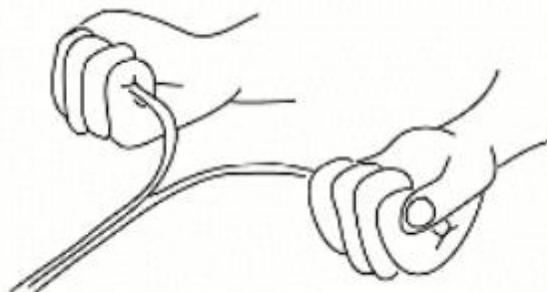
DATE & TIME: **Thursday, April 25th @ 6:30pm**

PLACE: Best Western Sovereign Hotel,
1228 Western Ave., Albany

APPETIZER: Garden salad

ENTREE: Haddock
Meatloaf
Chicken parmesan

DESSERT: Apple pie Price: \$ 20.00



PROGRAM: Bill Getz, Professional Dowser

Bill began dowsing at age 4, when a dowser came to locate a water source for his parents' restaurant in Central NY. Being curious, Bill watched the dowser as he did his work. He then picked up the Y shaped branch and got reaction over the water vein. The dowser, seeing this, then spent time teaching him the basics of dowsing. Nine years later, Bill had the opportunity to apply his gift. A local farmer was hand pumping over 500 gallons of water a day from the restaurant well to water his cows during a dry summer. Bill offered his services and successfully dowsed a shallow well site for him. Both the restaurant and farm wells are still producing water for their current owners.

RESERVATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL:

A caller should reach you prior to the meeting for your dinner reservation and your choice of entree. If a caller leaves a message, please make every effort to return his call. If a caller does not reach you by Thursday, April 18th, please call **John O' Grady** (372-5356). You are reminded that if you make a reservation for dinner you will be expected to honor your commitment.

Membership

We are sad to inform you that **Bill Robinson**, a double life member, has joined the other gardeners "Gone To Rest". **Bill** was an active and valuable member of our club for many years. We're going to miss you **Bill!** **Robinson, William C. ALBANY William C. Robinson**, 98, of Albany, died November 29, 2012 at Community Hospice of Albany. Born in Brooklyn on September 30, 1914, he was the son of Casper M. and Rhona Spencer Robinson. He was a lifelong area resident and attended local schools. For many years, he was employed as a foreman with the Albany Felt Co. Mr. Robinson was a past master of Ancient Temple 14 of the Free and Accepted Masons, where he was a member since March 17, 1948. He was also a member of the Cypress Temple Shrine and the **Albany Men's Garden Club**. He shared his voice in singing with the Capital Hill Choral Society

February Program

Capital District Garden and Flower Show

<http://www.gardenandflowershow.com>

We were fortunate enough to have **Pennie Gonzalez** – the Event Manager - and her sister **Sandy** join us for dinner and tell us about this year's **Capital District Garden and Flower Show**. **Penny Gonzalez** must get about an hour of sleep a night with all the work she must be doing to coordinate an event this large. Wildwood schools started this show around 25 years ago as a fundraiser to help support for kids with special needs and very special talents. Now this show has grown to a three day event with 40 plus educational speakers lined up, flower arrangement competitions (with some very interesting categories), educational exhibits (like the MGCA exhibit), wine tasting, and vendors selling anything from plants to the big boy toys that Abele Tractor supplies. **Pennie** asked me what my favorite part was and my response was: It is the exhibits set-up by the nurseries. Where else can you see 30 foot tall trees, huge stone walls, waterfalls, streams with fish, big cool looking buildings, gazebos, fireplaces, complete landscaped areas, including forest and flowers that shouldn't be in bloom at this time of year in the Northeast? I've seen single pieces of stone weighing over a ton used in landscaping or to build walls and all of this is done for three days. I couldn't set-up one of those exhibits in a lifetime – they do it in a few days and then they tear it all down. I'm not sure if I can bring my fishing pole but is sure is relaxing walking through or sitting down by a stream... It's enough to make you forget that you are actually inside a building.

Please stop by can check out the Capital District Flower and Garden Show that will be held March 22 – 24 at Hudson Valley Community College.

Thanks so much to **Pennie Gonzalez** and her sister **Sandy** for a very enjoyable and educational evening.

Website – MGCA

www.mensgardenclubofalbany.com

IF you have checked out our website recently

THEN you have noticed the *awesome* work that **Paul Zimmermann** has been doing to improve our website.

ELSE You are missing something that is getting better by the day



Just like the DIRT, the website is only as useful as its content. We have lots of room for articles, stories, past editions of the DIRT, links to your 2nd favorite website, articles about members and what projects they have been working on, member profiles, photos, event information or anything else you would like to make available via the WEB.

Two of our goals are to increase membership and provide useful / interesting information to our members and prospective members. You can help by providing any content that you feel can help us achieve those goals.

We have a great opportunity to make our website something that we can all be proud of and this will require two things. 1. A Web-Master that has the knowledge and can find the time to create an attractive site. 2. Content contributed by many different members of our club. **Paul Zimmermann** is our man for completing item # 1. Now we need content from YOU. Please contact **Paul Zimmermann** or any board member if you have any thoughts as to how we can further improve our website. **Paul** has done a ton of work improving the site and we owe a BIG Thank You to **Paul Zimmermann**. Please do your part and provide some feedback about the site.

Asparagus – The Dream Investment

By MGCA Board member - Paul Zimmermann

<http://www.mensgardenclubofalbany.org/asparagus.html>

For most folks investing these days is a sad joke - interest rates below 1% or a roller coaster stock market. If you're discouraged, take heart. An investment in asparagus futures will provide a substantial return on your investment and deliver a delicious and nutritious vegetable just at the time of the year when your body cries out for some truly fresh vegetables.

If you've eaten only asparagus from a supermarket or even a farmers market, then you really haven't tasted asparagus. Of course store bought asparagus drenched with Hollandaise sauce is very tasty, but then again so is crabgrass slathered with Hollandaise sauce. And the crabgrass is free. Asparagus from the market runs \$4 a pound, and once you've cut off the inedible portion of the stalk, you're really looking at \$6 a pound for a very poor substitute for the real stuff.

If I've managed to convince you that asparagus should be part of your garden, read on.

Asparagus is a perennial. It'll be two years from the time of initial planting of roots (3 years if you're foolish enough to start with seed) before you can reap a significant harvest, and a couple of more years until the plants are really in their prime. The good news is that a well tended bed of asparagus will last 15 or more years. For an expenditure of \$25 you'll harvest hundreds of dollars worth of tasty and nutritious asparagus spears, delighting your family and inspiring awe and admiration in your neighbors. Let's see - \$25 invested at 1% for ten years brings in \$2.71 in interest -enough to buy half a pound of tasteless spears at the store. Even Warren Buffet would agree that an asparagus bed wins hands down over your local bank.

Getting Started

Asparagus needs full sun and its ferns grow 4 to 5 feet tall by summer's end, so select a sunny spot in your garden where the asparagus won't shade sun-loving plants. Most folks select a spot on the north side of their garden.

Preparing the asparagus bed need not be a tremendous chore. I recommend a raised bed, but then again I'm a fervent believer in raised beds for all vegetables. Especially consider a raised bed if your soil is very clay-like. Add compost and dig into the existing soil. This work is best done in the fall, prior to the spring planting of the asparagus. Asparagus grows best in a soil with a pH of 7, so again, take time the previous fall to get the growing conditions optimized.

Asparagus plants need plenty of room. Keep them 18" apart for best long term results. Resist the temptation to crowd them because you don't want crowns you ordered to "go to waste". Give the extras to a neighbor, or even better, plant a second asparagus bed.

I recommend the "Jersey XXX" varieties of asparagus. They're very heavy producers with good disease resistance. For \$20-25 you get 25 roots, more than enough for the average bear.

For each plant dig a hole about 12" by 12" and 6" deep. In the center of the hole pour some soil to create a mini volcano about 4" high. Place the asparagus crown on top of the volcano with the roots running evenly down all sides. Then cover with soil so that just the tip of the crown is exposed. Keep watered and slowly fill in the hole as the asparagus begins to grow.

Asparagus – The Dream Investment continued

Harvest

The next spring resist the temptation to take more than 2-3 stalks per plant. The following year you can harvest a substantial number of stalks from each plant. Take only the ones that are 1/4" or more in diameter.

There are two primary ways to harvest the spears. The first involves cutting the spears off at or below the ground line. An alternate is to bend over the spear until it breaks. It will do so at the dividing line between the tender edible portion of the spear and the inedible part. In both cases the spear should be 6" to 8" tall when harvested. Harvest normally starts in early April in the Northeast and goes well into May. When the spears start to come up with a 'open" tip you'll know it's time to cease harvesting.

The normal asparagus harvest runs for about 8 weeks. If you want to extend it, try one of these two techniques:

1. Pull back the heavy layer of mulch in early spring on only half your asparagus. When the spears begin to appear, pull back the mulch in the second half. Production in the second half will be delayed until the soil warms up.
2. Harvest half the asparagus in spring. Let the other half grow unimpeded. Then in late July, cut the plants in the second half down to the ground and wait for the plants to grow new spears which you can then harvest. If you employ this technique, then do it consistently. If you switch the harvest cycle for a group of plants you're very likely to weaken them.

Maintenance

Keep your asparagus bed well weeded, well mulched and give it an occasional deep watering. Remember that the plants need to store up lots of energy for next spring's big push. In the late fall when the foliage has turned nearly all brown, trim the plants to about 2 inches above ground level. An electric hedge trimmer will make this chore go quickly. Mulch the beds lightly at first, but once the hard frosts appear, add a 4 to 6 inch layer of straw or your favorite mulch.

Asparagus has only one pest that is likely to torment you. The asparagus beetle (common and stripped) can prove quite persistent. Hand picking of both the beetles and their larvae can be an effective strategy. The beetle will scurry to the other side of the stalk when you approach, and will sometimes drop to the ground when you go to seize the little buggers. Be quick and merciless. Mid afternoon is the best time to play pick-a-beetle. Don't overlook their gray larvae since they do the real chomping. It's also possible to spray for the beetles, but I won't go there. My experience is that even if you leave the beetles to their devices, the damage to plants is not all that devastating and by late June the infestation peters out.

Living the Dream

You may not be featured in the Wall Street Journal, but your asparagus bed should provide you with many happy returns for many a year. Warren Buffet is a big believer that investments should be made with the long term in mind. Maybe he just hasn't yet discovered asparagus.

CLUB ACTIVITIES

Adopt-a-Highway

May 2010

Mums as of 10/4/2012



Airport

Albany County Airport where we maintain a 9/11 Memorial Garden.



Flower and Garden Show at HVCC – A great success - March 22nd – 24th

<http://www.gardenandflowershow.com>

We will have more on this next month when we have room in the newsletter

Scholarship

Seeking Candidates for Scholarship

Do you know a deserving college student who could benefit from receiving a \$500 Scholarship from our club? This year the Scholarship Committee would like to ask all our members to consider a personal family member who might qualify. Candidates can be a current college student, or registered to begin a college program this fall. Additionally, they should be pursuing studies in any horticultural-related field, including agriculture, environmental studies, forestry or natural resource management. Applicants need not live locally, and can be male or female. Perhaps you have a child, grandchild, nephew or niece, or other extended family member that would qualify? If so, please contact Greg Goutos, Scholarship Chair, at 861-6052 for application details. The deadline is May 20th.

Gardening from the Heart At the Center for Disability Services



Volunteers during February included: **Tom Baker, Carl Greenman, Maria Greenman, Russ Greenman, Joe Herman, and Bruce Wilcox.** Brrr, the house is colder than usual since we cut our firewood in slices for a couple different projects. The day before Valentine's Day, we cut out pictures of the consumers in the shape of a heart. Then they glued the photo onto a slice of seasoned firewood, drilled a hole, and added a chain so that they could hang them in a window, on a wall, or around their neck. We also used the home heating fuel (firewood) to make a base for the Owl, its babies and their nest. We watered, like we try to find time for every week, and planted more cuttings to replace the wimpy plants that thought they needed water to live. We're always looking for more help and good project ideas. Please stop by any Wednesday morning at 9:00am - no reservations required.



History - 25 years ago this month

MEN'S GARDEN CLUB OF ALBANY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MONTHLY MEETING MARCH 3, 1988

The Regular Monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of the Men's Garden Club of Albany was held on Thursday, March 3, 1988 in the Cerebral Palsy Center for the Disabled.

The meeting was called to order by President **Joe Huth** at 7:36 pm.

The Minutes of the February 4, 1988 meeting were approved as read by the Club Secretary, **Tom Baker**.

The Treasurer's Report was approved as read by **Don Stevens** Assistant Treasurer. As of February 29, 1988 there was a total balance on hand of \$2,077.76. In the Key Advantage account there was \$5,600.13.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Regional Flower Show: **Don Otterness** Co-chairman with **Al Miller** reported that the sign-up list to man the booth was complete. The promoters originally had intended that all show volunteers should pay the \$5.00 Admission Fee. **Don** assured the group that he would do all he could to get this rescinded. (This in fact was accomplished).

Plant Sale: No report.

Membership: **Bob Ireland** reported that to date, our membership stands at 107, with 4 members not having remitted their dues as yet. It was decided to continue sending them the Dirt for the time being. Our Life Membership still stands at 35.

Program: **Ferd Johnson** reporting for **Don Lewis** who is still in Florida. The March 24 Dinner meeting will be held at Veeders with the serving time to begin at 6:30, Dutch treat at 5:00. Entree choices are: Roast Turkey and Broiled Scrod at \$11.00. **Roy Boutard**, a Life Member of our Club, will present a program of slides with animated commentary entitled "Reflections on Flower Shows". The program is at 7:30 for those who can't make the dinner.

The White Flower Farm was ruled out for the Summer Picnic.

The Story Nursery in the Catskill area seemed to be the best spot to go to. There is also a Mushroom Growing concern there which we can visit. **Bob Byfuss**, one of our recent speakers lives in the area and has invited us to visit his home if we are in the area.

Bill Blackmore will give a talk and show slides on his visit to Australia and New Zealand at the Ladies Invited Dinner on April 28. **Tom Baker** will verify our reservation at the Western Turnpike for this event.

OTHER BUSINESS

Bob Ireland, coordinator and lecturer, of the Judging School, reported that there still is a possibility that there may be a school this year.

Joe Huth reported that the Federation of Garden Clubs of New York State (women), would be holding a meeting on April 20-22 at the Co-operative Ext. **Mrs. Betty Corning** will be a prominent attendee.

Al Miller has been authorized to have 300 new application forms printed.

Al will be attending the Central Great Lakes Regional meeting on May 27-29.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:01.

Respectfully submitted by

Tom Baker, Secretary

Editor's note: **Tom Baker** has been faithfully documenting our minutes since way before he had personal computer - but somehow he has managed to digitize all of the minutes he has taken over the years and we now include them in our newsletter under the heading "History - 25 years ago this month"

Thanks, **Tom Baker!!!**

Memorial Garden
At the Albany County Cooperative Extension

Joe Huth

Memorial Garden Chairman



Memorial – Harris Parents

Thanks to **Phil Harris**, his brother **Dave** and their **sister**, for making a centerpiece every month in

memory of their parents. It's really hard to imagine how much work and money must go into getting the materials and the artistic ability to make such beautiful centerpieces.

The **Harris's** have been making these in memory of their parents for as long as I can remember. **Phil and Dave Harris** bring one to every meeting and it is raffled off to raise money to support our memorial gardens. What a nice way to remember your parents. We thank **Phil** for starting this and **Dave** and their **sister** for helping to continue the tradition. **Thanks!!!**



Members – If you have any information about a member that hasn't been feeling up to par lately, please let us know, so we can include something in the DIRT and/or have our Sunshine committee get a card to him.

DATES TO REMEMBER

April 25th, May 23rd (Ladies Invited night)	<u>Dinner Meetings</u>
April 4th @ 7:30 pm	Director's meeting – all members invited Center for Disability Services – Manning Blvd
Wednesdays : April 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th @ 9:00 am	Gardening from the Heart Center for Disability Services 700 South Pearl St. Albany, NY
April 25th @ 6:30 pm	Dinner Meeting Best Western Sovereign

Russ Greenman and Jack Meagher, Editors

Please support research for **ALS** (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis - Lou Gehrig's disease) in memory of one of our most active members - **Mr. Bill Town** <http://community.als.net/teamtown>

In Memory

Of My

Loving Wife, Jessie

Jerry Flax

In Memory of

*Louis Meo
&
Richard Stankus*

In Memory of

Ed Tompkins

Jerry Flax

In Memory of

Avrom Koblenz

Jerry Flax

In Memory of

*Christian and Mildred
Lebrecht*

In Memory of

*Al and Barbara
Miller*

In Memory of



Bill Town

Joe Herman

In Memory of

my Dad



Carroll W. Greenman

Bob

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In Memory of



Grandpa & Great Grandpa

Carroll W. Greenman

Russ, Maria, and Carl

In Memory of my parents



John and Carrie Meagher

They both loved Plants and Flowers

Jack Meagher