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www.mensgardenclubofalbany.com



(Serving the greater capital region)

Celebrating **78** years of service to our community

(First Chartered 1936)

VOLUME 77 NO. 1

January, 2014

January Dinner

DATE & TIME: **Thursday, January 23rd @ 6:30pm**

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

APPETIZER: Garden Salad

ENTREE: Hot Roast Beef with Home Style Gravy

Chicken Marsala

Salmon Filet

DESSERT: Carrot Cake

Price: \$ 20.00

PROGRAM: We're very fortunate to have **Kathryn Mohr** from the **American Iris Society** as our guest speaker. **Kathryn's** program "**Extending the Iris Season**" covers everything from Dwarf irises that begin to bloom in mid to late April in the Capital Region, then come median iris and finally tall bearded iris through late May. Bloom continues through June with various types of beardless iris. **Kathryn Mohr** will also touch on reblooming iris and include a section on (her special interest) **Heirloom varieties of Iris**.

I'm not sure how **Joe Herman** convinced her to join us - But I'm sure we're in for a real treat.

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, January 16th, please call **Russ Greenman** at 477-8321 - Note: Callers – Please call **Russ Greenman** with your group's reservations. If it's easier for you to email the dinner info – please send it to MGCA1@verizon.net (note: the character after MGCA in the email address is a Number "1")

You are reminded that if you make a reservation for dinner you will be expected to honor your commitment.

Membership

Dues are due in small unmarked bills (25 of them) – mailed to **Russ Greenman**

December's Program



NYS Bird – The Bluebird

- We were honored to have **Norman and Phyllis Frey** attend our dinner last month.



Norman Frey taught us how much difference humans can make to help bring back the bluebird population. If we build their boxes and install them in pairs 8-10 feet apart, the bluebirds will have a better chance at finding an unoccupied box. Other types of birds won't build a nest so close to an existing nest built by a bird of their same species. Who knew how mean those House Sparrows (gang members) are? I guess that even the little Wrens are a threat to the baby Bluebirds. I always thought that four legged critters like raccoons, as well as snakes were the only things to worry about. Members of the **NYS Bluebird Society** have built literally thousands of bluebird boxes and placed many of them along Route 20. They also provide free cleaning service (each Spring), health care (once the babies hatch, blow flies occasionally need to be pulled off of the young), and nest maintenance (**Norman** has even had to use his building skills to rebuild damaged nests). All of this work has really paid off as they fledge 5000 baby bluebirds every year. The bluebird houses are built and installed on a post at the edge of a field – with the opening facing South West. Then, each week of the nesting season, volunteers monitor every box and record the results that are eventually sent to the **NYS Bluebird Society**. Every Spring there is a team of volunteers like **Norman and Phyllis Frey** that clean out the boxes and spray them with a safe soap. I hope they remember to stop at my house. **Norman** is too nice to ask – but, he and **Phyllis** belong to the **NYS Bluebird Society** and I'm sure they could use any help we can offer. Additionally there is a very cool newsletter that they publish that is included with your membership in the **NYS Bluebird Society**. For only \$10 / year you can become a member and help support their efforts. Please visit <http://www.nysbs.org/> for membership information and some very interesting facts about bluebirds. If you don't have Internet access – please ask any MGCA board member and we will print the information for you.

We'll look forward to meeting **Norman and Phyllis Frey** again at the **NYS Bluebird Society's** booth at the Capital District Flower and Garden show at Hudson Valley Community College from March 21-23, 2014.

Many Thanks to Norman and Phyllis Frey

Advertisements

The 2014 Advertising campaign has started. Earlier in November, the Club sent letters to about 20 businesses requesting their support by purchasing an ad in our DIRT and on our website. The typical cost for a business for the year is \$60. Last year we had 6 businesses buy advertisements that were mailed and emailed each month, and placed on every page of the Men's Garden Club of Albany's website.

We also had about 10 businesses that donated plants for our plant sale but they did not all agree to purchase an ad. Perhaps we will do better this year with ads.

If any member knows a business that may want to advertise in the DIRT, please let me know or let one of the officers know and I will send a request to the business.

Jack Meagher my email : jack12047@nycap.rr.com

Scholarship Winner – Carl Greenman

Greg Goutos has been doing an awesome job finding qualified candidates for our annual contribution to a student worthy of a \$500 gift from the Men's Garden Club of Albany. **Greg Goutos** and his co-chairman **Joe Herman** have searched many of the local schools for candidates and in recent years we have been trying to select students that are related to our members. I believe that is a way to support and give back to our membership.

This year **Carl Greenman** was interviewed and selected by **Greg Goutos** and **Joe Herman**. At our Christmas dinner program, **Greg Goutos** listed many of the things that **Carl Greenman** has done over the years to support the MGCA as well as his community. Actually, I was impressed by hearing so many of his accomplishments over the years. Then **Carl Greenman** gave a very well prepared speech thanking many, including his parents, **Greg Goutos** and **Joe Herman**. **Bill Town** and **Marilou Town** got a special mention as **Bill Town** taught **Carl** a lot about trees, gave him books to help identify trees and took him out to Oakwood Cemetery to learn about the many unique trees that grow there.

Of course, his favorite mentor – **Don Otterness** was discussed at length. **Don Otterness** was a past national MGCA youth chairman and **Carl's** 4H leader. **Don Otterness** taught **Carl** how to care for the animals (including a sheep that **Don** gave to **Carl**), garden, and work on the hay wagon. **Don** took **Carl** to the Altamont fair where **Carl** and **Turbo** (his sheep) won many blue ribbons. Eventually **Don** said that **Carl** was ready to bring Turbo out to the NYS Fair. What an experience! **Carl** and **Turbo** got little sleep that week – but, they received many blue ribbons. **Don** also taught **Carl** how to do public presentations and I think that training paid off well.



Maria G, Carl Greenman and Greg Goutos

Congratulations to **Carl Greenman!!!**

Installation of Officers

We want to thank **Don Wrieden** for doing a very professional job of installing the officers of the Men's Garden Club of Albany. We're all excited to have **Greg Shields** as a new board member with his wealth of knowledge and energy to get things done.



Greg Shields, Don Wrieden, Jack Meagher, Bruce Wilcox, Russ Greenman, Bill Danish, Chuck Scott, Tom Baker and Joe Herman

President **Chuck Scott**
1st V.P. **Joseph Herman**
Rec. Sec'y **Thomas Baker**
Treasurer **Russ Greenman**
Editor "DIRT" **Russ Greenman & Jack Meagher**

DIRECTORS

2016 - **Greg Shields – Bill Danish**
2015 - **Jack Meagher - Paul Zimmermann**
2014 - **Bruce Wilcox - Don Wrieden**

REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Thomas Baker & Charles Ireland

Early Tomatoes - by Author - Paul Zimmermann

Early Tomatoes

When I was a novice gardener I thought serious bragging rights were due to any tomato grower that was harvesting ripe tomatoes by July 4th. While that's an admirable accomplishment even by today's standards, the bar has risen by a full month. Follow my advice and you too can be feasting on ripe tomatoes by early June! (And without a greenhouse!). Personal disclosure - my record is June 6th. Note: Most of the techniques enumerated here were stolen from *Crockett's Victory Garden*. I've fiddled with a few details and added some additional information gleaned from my 10 years of experience practicing this rare form of gardening insanity.

Before enumerating the necessary steps for rising into the upper echelons of tomato culture stardom, let me mention that you're going to have some large plants on your hands by May 1st when the tomatoes go into the ground. I start with six seedlings, and as time goes on I give away all but two of the healthiest plants.

So here's the precise pathway to horticultural heaven:

1. Start Early Girls in the first 2 weeks of January (yes, January)
2. Keep them under florescent lights 18 hours a day (keep the lights very close to the plants)
3. Transplant them into successively larger containers every 4 weeks or so. Plant them deeper each time.
4. Bring them outside into the sunshine starting when the days are at least in the 60's (April or so). Avoid windy days. By mid April flowers will begin to form on the plants. You're well on your way to the Promised Land.
5. In early April cover the garden soil where you'll be planting your tomatoes with clear plastic (not black plastic which does not warm up the soil nearly as much as clear plastic)
6. On May 1st (or so) plant them in the spot that you've been warming with the clear plastic. As always, plant the tomatoes deeper so that more of the stem is below the soil line. It's very likely that small to medium sized tomatoes will have formed by this point (in fact, if they haven't, you're running behind schedule).
7. Place a cage made from concrete reinforcing wire over the tomatoes and then wrap clear plastic around the cage. I use bungee cords to secure the plastic around the cages. You must anchor the cages to the ground or they will tip over in high wind.

The month of May can be a time of wildly fluctuating weather. In some locales the temperature may dip down into the 30's at night. Since you've no doubt taken my advice and have limited yourself to 2 plants, the extreme steps outlined here shouldn't be too onerous.

I've used two techniques to keeping my precious tomatoes warm on cold nights:

1. A small lamp with a 25 watt bulb (this has the additional benefit of preventing your tomatoes from having early blight nightmares).
2. Bottles filled with hot water (or used crankcase oil).

Early Tomatoes - by Author - Paul Zimmermann - continued

Technique number 1 requires far less effort once you've set up the electrical connections. There will be days, especially towards the end of May, when you will want to take the plastic wrap off the cages to allow the tomato plants full exposure to the sun and prevent overheating of their enclosures. Using bungee cords to hold the plastic in place makes these maneuvers fairly easy to perform.

As you can easily see, no small amount of labor and love go into this endeavor, but did Edison invent the light bulb overnight? By containing your experiment to just 2 plants, you'll somewhat limit your effort and still provide enough ripe tomatoes in June and July to be the envy of the entire neighborhood and your Facebook universe.



Figure 1 Early tomatoes shortly after transplanting

Some additional notes:

DO NOT heavily fertilize the plants! They will put all their energy into foliage production and you'll be lucky to get a single ripe tomato by August. A little half strength liquid fertilizer when they first go into the ground should be plenty.

As for tomato cages, the store-bought variety, at least the ones I've seen, won't do the trick (too small). I suggest building cages out of concrete reinforcing wire. Handling the reinforcing wire and creating the cages will be challenging (actually very challenging). The cages should be about 25" in diameter. Wear heavy work gloves when working with the wire unless you're aiming for a prolonged trip to the DL.

So that's it. My advice is to keep your little experiment a secret from the neighbors, and then surprise them with some of the fruits of your labor if and when you succeed. As their awe and admiration wash over you in tidal waves of red envy, you'll be forced to admit

that it was all worth it. After all, isn't that the very core of human striving - to demonstrate your horticultural superiority over mere mortals who are inexplicably willing to accept August tomatoes as the immutable course of intergalactic destiny?

Website – MGCA

www.mensgardenclubofalbany.com

(just click on the link)

Thanks **Paul Zimmermann!!!**

History - 25 years ago last month
MEN'S GARDEN CLUB OF ALBANY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MONTHLY MEETING
DECEMBER 1, 1988

The Regular Monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of the Men's Garden Club of Albany, was held on Thursday evening, December 1, 1988, in the Cerebral Palsy Center for the Disabled.

The meeting was called to order by President **Joe Huth** at 7:35.

The Minutes of the November 3, 1988 meeting were not available.

The Treasurer's Report was approved as read by **Paul Hughes**, our Club Treasurer. As of November 30, 1988 there was a balance in the General Fund of \$3,215.14, in the Key Advantage Account there was \$5,115.59 and in the Memorial Fund there was \$318.91.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Program: **Don Lewis**, Chairman, reporting:

December 15, 1988 - Ladies Invited Night, held in the Turf Inn the cost will be \$15.00.

Two entrees to choose from - Broiled Scrod or London Broil. The entertainment will be **Ronnie and Sylvia Nelson** of Catskill with a third person costing \$150.00. Installation of Officers and Awards Presentations will also take place.

Awards: **Glenn Witecki**, Chairman:

1. One award will be presented to an outstanding Apartment Complex and another to a Floral Shop in Delmar. 2. Two Bronze Awards will be presented to two Club members. 3. **Glenn** will be allowed to pay for two guests from the Club Treasury.

Bulb Sale: Board voted to send \$700 to the Berkshire Gardens as our annual contribution.

Gardening From the Heart: **Al Miller**, Chairman, was absent, **Wally Dillenbeck** reported:

1. The Winter Sale by the Clients with the assistance of our regular crew, made \$230.50. On behalf of the Clients and men, Wally thanked the Club for winding the grapevines into wreaths.

2. **Don Otterness**, said that **Bill Krug** has offered to donate a Greenhouse for the Center at 700 South Pearl Street. The size is 27 x 12 feet with the possibility of an addition being added later if needed. The cost to the Center would be between 4 and \$500 and the cost to the Club would be minimal. The Board voted to "go ahead." The Center has to give its final approval. **Don** feels that the Center is being somewhat difficult in this matter. A committee of, **Al Miller, Don Lewis, Don Otterness** and **Wally Dillenbeck** will go in a group and meet with **Gerald Fitzgerald**. A tentative date is December 9 in the morning.

3. The Board voted to reimburse, **Don Otterness** \$91.00 for the amount he spent on the Nature Trail at the South Manning Boulevard facility.

Dirt Ad Committee - **Ferd Johnson**, Chairman, will serve another year as Chairman, but he will need a replacement for **Jack Spear** who died just recently.

Membership - Chairman **Bob Ireland** we have 4 new members and 2 new life members.

State Museum - **Ferd Johnson** reported that **Miriam Soffer**, of the Museum Staff, has invited our Club to a reception honoring all garden clubs that have participated, as we have in beautifying the Museum Lobby in the summer months.

Mrs Erastus Corning II will host the reception. **Mrs. Evelyn Sturdevan** will demonstrate how to make some unusual holiday decorations.

Sunshine - **Tom Baker**, Chairman of the Sunshine Committee, advised to notify the **Jack Spear** family and the family of **Paul Phillip** that trees will be planted in their memory on Cooperative Extension grounds. A sympathy card to **Bob Killough** on the death of his mother.

Program Committee: **Don Lewis**, Chairman, advised the Board that the Wolfert's Roost will not be able to put on our dinners as hoped for because they are going through extensive renovations. Two dates to keep in mind are Ladies Night on April 27, and May 25, a visit to **Richard Anderson's** garden on Lark Street in Albany. Summer picnic sometime in August.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Don Lewis** - new committee chairmen will be found in the upcoming Dirt.

2. We will not participate in the next Capital District Garden Show, no reason was recorded, however, the Board voted to donate \$50.00 for the cause.

3. The 1989 National Convention will be held on Oregon, August 16 - 19.

4. July will be our month to put up a display in the Museum assisted by **Paul Steinkamp**.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15.

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!!!**

CLUB ACTIVITIES

.Gardening from the Heart At the Center for Disability Services



lights in our classroom. **Bruce Wilcox** brought in

an Oxalis plant that he had grown at home and that afternoon I received a nice letter from **Joe Huth** with an attached paper about Oxalis and where we could order them from. One day **Joe Herman** brought in his ukulele and sang a variety of Christmas and other holiday type songs. You should hear his voice – I'm not sure if I know anyone that sounds better than **Joe Herman**. It got everyone in the mood and you should have heard those

consumers singing along with Joe. Now **Joe Herman** and **Tom Baker** are members of a huge Choir – The Festival Celebration Choir – but I think they may have some competition from the consumers. And just when you thought it couldn't get any better, **Carl Greenman** had some craft projects for the consumers to work on. **Carl** went out and purchased a bunch of items to make ornaments like wreathes or candy canes made with beads and wooden block letters that slid over colored pipe cleaners to spell their name. Some made necklaces and bracelets, but all had fun.

Volunteers during December included: **Tom Baker, Carl Greenman, Russ Greenman, Joe Herman, Joe Huth, Jack Meagher, Greg Shields, and Bruce Wilcox**. We have been planting cuttings from various plants that are growing under



Coleen had a terrific project 12/11/13



Carl Greenman teaching
12/18/13



Bob Pratt, one of **Jerome's** ladies, & **Jerry Flax**



Adopt-A-Highway 12/2013

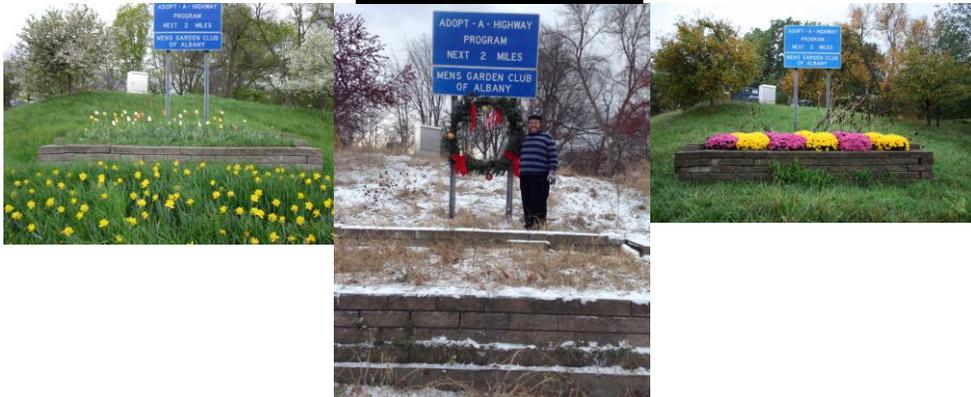
Memorial Garden
At the Albany County Cooperative Extension



Joe Huth / Chuck Scott
Memorial Garden Chairmen



Adopt-a-Highway



Greg Shields – Chief Architect

Albany International Airport

Don Wrieden - Chairman



Please support research for **ALS** (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis - **Lou Gehrig's disease**) in memory of one of our most active members - **Mr. Bill Town**

Click on this link to read his story: <http://community.als.net/teamtown>

DATES TO REMEMBER

February 6th @ 7:30 pm	Director's meeting – all members invited Center for Disability Services – Manning Blvd
Every Wednesday : @ 9:00 am	Gardening from the Heart Center for Disability Services 700 South Pearl St. Albany, NY
January 23rd @ 6:30 pm February 27th @ 6:30 pm	Dinner Meetings Best Western Sovereign Hotel 1228 Western Ave Albany, NY

Russ Greenman and Jack Meagher, Editors

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