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<http://www.gardenclubofthecapitaldistrict.org>

(Serving the greater capital region)

Celebrating **86** years of service to our community

VOLUME 85 NO. 1

(First Chartered 1936)

January, 2022

DATE & TIME: Thursday, January 20 @ 7:00 pm - One week early

PLACE: Zoom -

Join Zoom Meeting - All members and the public are welcome!

<https://cornell.zoom.us/j/94646484383?pwd=S3FBL0MvNTlOQ01Y5TWYvQk15eWxKdz09>

Program accessible from anywhere in the world via the Internet

You can “Join using a Browser” Downloading ZOOM is NOT required

A telephone # is supplied for an audio connection with or without a computer

PROGRAM: January Zoom Presentation:

Gardening in a Changing Climate

For our January presentation, join us via Zoom as we discuss a topic that will not only be very informative, but timely as well. Hear the latest news about our climate and the changes that will affect you. Learn how to adapt your gardening practices and how to mitigate your effect on the environment.

Martha (Martie) Teumim has been an Albany County Master Gardener off and on since 1982. During the past several years she has been part of a Cornell-based team which studied the topic of climate change and created educational products on the subject.

Martie is a retired high school English teacher who has two grown daughters and two grandchildren. She lives in Delmar with her husband and two cats.

Join Zoom Meeting - Thursday, January 20 @ 7:00 pm

Gardening in a Changing Climate

<https://cornell.zoom.us/j/94646484383?pwd=S3FBL0MyNTlQQ01Y5TWYvQk15eWxKdz09>

Meeting ID: 946 4648 4383

Passcode: 412852

One tap mobile

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December meeting Thank You

Follow-up to December Presentation:

Those who watched **Michele Peters** of Ambiance perform her floral design magic, know how she can use unusual containers and turn her arrangements into something truly wonderful. At our December Holiday presentation, we honored the ladies in our lives, by allowing them a chance to receive one of the eight floral arrangements that **Michele** created. The next day, **Russ Greenman** and **Greg Goutos** went to the Ambiance Floral shop in Loudonville to pick up the arrangements, and personally deliver them to all the lucky recipients. Thank you, Michele, for making our December Holiday meeting so special, and also to **Russ** and **Greg** for their assistance.

Those who were fortunate to receive one this year were: **Marcia Scott, Janet Meagher, Tina Raggio, Cindy Jennings, Louise Lifford** and **Gail Wrieden, Jean Dearstyne, and Lorraine Felegy**.

Thanks to our guests

We're especially grateful for the non members that joined us and for those that helped share the invitation to join in for the fantastic program. Friends of our members as well as our friends from the **Guilderland Garden Club** and the **Rome Garden Club** helped to spread the word. Thanks!!!

Update - Growing Greens Under Lights

Last year I began to grow greens under lights during our all too long winter. In general I would rate my experience as highly positive, but a few adjustments were in order.

I continued to grow lettuce – the Red Fire variety. That worked out very well and I had a steady supply throughout the winter and when spring arrived I planted the surviving plants directly in the garden (after hardening them off for a few days).

I also grew Mizuna, and although the plants did very well, I felt that they were not as productive as the lettuce and therefor abandoned them this year. I am growing some basil which is flourishing, but needs to be constantly nipped off at the top.

Although I did not keep records, I would recommend that a new set of plants be started every 4 to 6 weeks. At some point the lettuce plants become spindly and less productive and should be replaced.

As mentioned in a previous article, harvest the lettuce leaves from the bottom (or outside). These leaves have an unpardonable habit of wilting fairly quickly, so you need to keep after them.

If you're just starting out, be sure to purchase LED shop lights. I find the older fluorescent lights are not as reliable, much more awkward because of their weight to move around, and the lettuce seems to grow marginally less enthusiastically under them. I was very happy with the LED lights I purchased thru Amazon.

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07D946QSY/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&th=1

I also found that if you're going to be away for a few day (up to a week), filling the trays with an half inch of water will keep the lettuce happy while you fritter away your time elsewhere.

I find 6 plants provides enough lettuce for a decent sized salad every day.

Happy harvesting.



Club dues support community work

Garden Club of the Capital District members support educational programming, a scholarship program and youth gardening initiatives club dues. The club board of directors has established a new dues tier for 2022, reflecting our transition from the Men's Garden Club of Albany to the Garden Club of the Capital District.

In addition to our long-standing \$25 dues for individual members, we will now offer family memberships for \$30. We are appreciative of members paying dues early in the new year.

Please send your check - Payable to MGCA - until we get the legal paperwork completed to: Russ Greenman GCCD Treasurer
25 Worthman Lane
Rensselaer, NY 12144

Youth Gardening

Our Youth Gardening program has found another worthwhile program to support. Check out our very own - **Bill Stoneman's** [The Vegetable Project](#) -



The Vegetable Project, a volunteer nonprofit school gardening program that is led by club board member **Bill Stoneman**, reports that it has brought what it calls “doing and touching and tasting and experiencing” to nearly [500 Albany schools students](#) since September.

“We are just beginning to build enough consistency in our programming to think about getting Garden Club of the Capital District members involved,” **Bill** says, quickly adding, “Encouraging kids with widely varying experiences and exposure to the outdoors to get comfortable getting their hands and knees dirty can be incredibly gratifying and can make a difference in the lives of many kids.”

And it can be as vital a part of teaching and learning as the more obvious school subjects, he says, if it provides a path for



connecting kids who are not thriving in school with caring adults.

Youth Gardening continued
Bill Stoneman's [The Vegetable Project](#)

While school partners have not committed to any specific plans or scheduling yet, **Bill** says he envisions Vegetable Project volunteers starting seeds indoors with classes before the outdoor growing season arrives and leading classes on “touch-and-taste garden walkarounds” before school lets out in June and when it re-opens in September.

More about the Vegetable Project’s work is at the [organization's web site](#) and [Facebook page](#).

Creating hands-on learning opportunities

www.vegetableproject.org
www.facebook.com/vegetableproject

Special thanks to **Jack Meagher** for spending time helping kids in the vegetable project program.



A Blast from the Past Don Otterness



Times Union photo by Tom LaPoint

EAST MEETS WEST — Lyova Matosyan shears a sheep at the home of Guilderland farmer Don Otterness, right, while other members of a delegation of Soviet farmers observe. Other visitors are, clockwise from left, Ashot Episkopsyan, Igor Yakubovsyan, Karain Badalyan, Pavel Hudoyan and Rashid Birukov. Otterness invited them via a letter to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Common ground

Guilderland farmer shares know-how, friendship with visiting Soviets

By Michael Lopez

Staff writer

GUILDERLAND — As six Soviet farmers helped their American host, Donald Otterness, groom a sheep, clipping a stray curl of wool here and there, an interpreter translated their first impressions of the United States.

America is a *skazka*, a fairy tale, of clean roads and kind people. But if they are impressed, they also are "pressed" by this country's prosperity, said Tatiana Starostina, because it reminds them of their own poverty.

Their two-week visit is a glowing example of the warmth between ordinary American and Soviet people — farmers helping farmers, neighbors gathering for a lamb barbecue at the Otterness sheep farm, a Thanksgiving dinner in August to show why Americans are thankful.

It is also a reminder of how hard life has become for Soviets as their country copes with the piecemeal reforms of perestroika.

Their tales of America would be scarcely believable, Starostina said. "If Russians can

ever have such a very good life, this life makes people very kind, very free."

Her description of this feeling is poetic, indirect but understood. "When you say 'America' in Russia, the eyes begin to shine."

The six men were brought here by Starostina's organization to learn about American farms. They speak little English, but their joviality and improvised hand signals seem just about all Otterness and his friends need to communicate.

"I found out people are the same the world over," Otterness said Sunday at Rolling Acres, his 70-acre farm. The idea of hosting the group, came after the death two years ago of his older brother, William, who had a fervent interest in the Soviet Union.

The Soviets took Otterness up on an offer to host the men shortly after he suggested it in a letter to President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

Otterness has packed their agenda with visits to Cornell University, and to local breeding, commercial and hobby farms. Sunday, for

example, they saw the Glenmont sheep and goat farm of Margaret and Dick Law.

Four of the farmers — Lyova Matosyan, Ashot Episkopsyan, Karain Badalyan and Pavel Hudoyan — are starting a geese farm. Igor Yakubovsky raises beef cattle and Rashid Birukov, a scientist and teacher, also farms.

They are beginners, learning in a country that is gradually moving from collective state-owned farms to small private farms, Starostina said. The six farmers are eager to learn U.S. farming techniques. "They would take everything (back) if they could," she said.

Otterness has had the help of many neighbors and friends who have dropped off clothes the men might use, or planned their entertainment. "They love the whole idea," said Sonja Danese, a friend of Otterness.

She also has learned from the group. "I think that we — even more than them — need to know what's going on in the world.

"If people could meet each other on a one-to-one basis, there wouldn't be any wars."

A Blast from the Past continued

Donald Ruthford Otterness

GUILDERLAND — A farmer and a teacher, Donald Ruthford Otterness linked generations of local kids to farm life.

“He was a patient person,” said Clare Mertz of Voorheesville, whose children were in the **Country Tigers 4-H Club led by Mr. Otterness**. “He loved the children and gave 100 percent up till the very end....His life was one of devout service.”

“His teaching was very intuitive, very experiential,” said his son, Dr. Richard Otterness, the oldest of his four children. “That’s how he was as a father, too. He was not much for reading and concepts and theories. He had you get out and do it.”

Mr. Otterness died on Friday, March 20, 2009, at his farmhouse off of Dunnsville Road, on the outskirts of Altamont, surrounded by people he loved. He was 77.

“He was really, truly an idea man,” said his wife, Sonja Otterness. “He was a Gemini, two people...He was always starting something then working out how to do it.”

She gave as an example the United States-Russian Farm Exchange that **Mr. Otterness** initiated. **Mr. Otterness** wrote directly to General Secretary **Mikhail Gorbachev**.

“Lo and behold,” said his wife, “he got a call from an agency in Russia.” **Mr. Otterness** had bacon on the stove in the farmhouse kitchen when he answered the phone and was talking through a translator when he saw the bacon was burning. He picked up the flaming pan, said his wife, and swiftly threw it out the door as the translator continued.

“He got back on the phone and they never knew what happened,” she concluded.

The program moved forward. “That summer, we had eight Russians and an interpreter come to the farm,” said **Mrs. Otterness**. It was the summer of 1991. “They were here when the coup happened in Russia,” she recalled. **Mikhail Gorbachev** spent three days under house arrest that August before being restored to power as support swung to **Boris Yeltsin**.

“The following year, we went to Russia,” said **Mrs. Otterness**. And more Russians then came to visit Altamont. “We met a wonderful young man who stayed with us and is now an American citizen,” said **Mrs. Otterness**.

Dr. Otterness said that the exchange with Russia was motivated by his father’s desire to honor the memory of his older brother, **William**, who was active in an international peacemaking network.

At a time when the Soviet Union was an oppressive force, “it was about relationships between average citizens,” said **Dr. Otterness**.

Farming was central to Mr. Otterness his whole life. He was born in Leon Township, Minnesota, the son of the late Benjamin and Randie (Ramstad) Otterness. He grew up on a farm, one of nine children — two boys and seven girls.

He kept in touch with his Norwegian roots as a member of the Sons of Norway, Freehold — a fraternal benefit society, based in Minneapolis, that promotes and preserves Norwegian culture and heritage.

Drafted at the age of 21, Mr. Otterness served for two years in the United States Army. He received his basic training at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, and then fought in the Korean War, stationed for 13 months in a bunker just below the 38th parallel, close to Pusan.

Mr. Otterness graduated from South Dakota State with a degree in animal husbandry, his son said. "His first job was working as a herdsman for one of Carnation Dairy's two show herds," he said. "There's a picture of him leading a cow into the lobby of the Hilton Hotel in Chicago."

Mr. Otterness came east to work as a herdsman of a large dairy farm downstate. "The owner's wife said, 'You're really good with children. You should go into education.' So he left to become a teacher," said his son.

He taught fifth grade at Voorheesville Elementary School for many years and later became the school's science coordinator, a position created for him, said his son.

He took his students on field trips to his farm, and built a covered bridge over the Vly Creek, creatively connecting the parking lot to the school.

He also taught at the Helderberg Workshop in the summers where the hands-on approach to learning fit with his teaching style.

In Dr. Otterness's boyhood, his father raised cattle. "He took great pride in his farm," he said. "He gave us the freedom to buy and sell and develop our own herds to make money for college."

Richard Otterness went on to earn a doctorate degree in theology and is a minister with the Reformed Church in America, serving now in Hungary. "My wife and I are ecumenical mission partners, working with the Roma people, commonly called gypsies," he said, describing them as the most oppressed ethnic group in Europe.

His current work, Dr. Otterness said, is a legacy of his father. He explained, "His philosophy was: If a door opens, take it."

In his later years, Mr. Otterness focused on raising sheep and was active in the Eastern Wool Growers Association, the Shepherds Association, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and 4-H. He was superintendent of livestock at the Altamont Fair for many years.

He also kept border collies, trained to herd his sheep, and gave demonstrations of their herding capabilities.

Mr. Otterness was a member of the Albany Men's Garden Club and the National Men's Garden Club.

"He loved flowers," said his wife. "He was in charge of the Guilderland Cemetery for years. He would take bouquets that were left there and make arrangements out of them for nursing homes."

Mr. Otterness met his wife, Sonja, when he brought hay for her horses on Meadowdale Road, she said. "We met in a hayloft," she quipped. "We were two black sheep....I'm hard to harness but I'm worse to drive."

Throughout their marriage, the pair loved to dance, she said. "He was a wonderful dancer," she said. Recalling a vacation they took to Jamaica, she went on, "He was a reggae king in Jamaica." And, she said, the couple won a dance contest doing the twist on a boat on Lake George. "We usually had an audience," she said.

Her husband loved children, Mrs. Otterness said. "We would take our miniature horse to St. Peter's to cheer up patients there," she said.

"His specialty was taking children who didn't live on farms and giving them farm opportunities," said Ms. Mertz.

She also said, "He was a fixture at the sheep barn at the fair. Everybody coming through knew him. He would chat from sunrise to sunset...He was a champion showman and won a lot of ribbons, which was a source of tremendous pride for him. The farm was his life. He loved it...."

"Don was a born teacher, had a wonderful sense of humor, possessed the gift of gab, and true love for children and animals," Ms. Mertz concluded. "Husband, grandfather, teacher, and friend, the world has lost one of the most kind-hearted and generous people we were all fortunate to know."

Don Otterness was quite a guy

He did so much for others. He was the national Youth Chairman, taught 4-H, gave my son **(Carl)** a pure bred Cotswold sheep that won blue ribbons at the Altamont Fair. Then **Don** lifted (he was stronger than me) the sheep into the back of his pickup truck and took us out to the NYS Fair where **Carl** won more blue ribbons.

Hoffman Car Wash Award

Carroll Greenman (my Grandfather) Presenting a beautification award to **Tom Hoffman** with **Al Miller** looking on.

This photo was recently found and I believe it is around 45 years old. Today gardens at the **Hoffman Car Wash** and **Jiffy Lube** locations are among the best in the area. If you ever take a close look at what is growing at these locations - you'll be amazed.

Congratulations to the Hoffman Car Wash Gardeners.



History - 35 years ago –
MEN'S GARDEN CLUB OF ALBANY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MONTHLY MEETING
JANUARY 8, 1987

The Regular Monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of the Men's Garden club of Albany, was held on Thursday evening, January 8, 1987 in the Cerebral Palsy Center for the Disabled.

The meeting was called to order by **President, Joe Huth** at 7:35; 13 members present.

The Minutes of the November 6, 1986 meeting were approved as read by the Club Secretary, **Tom Baker**. There was no December meeting as voted on by the Board.

The Club Treasurer, **Paul Hughes**, presented two reports: As of November 30, 1986 there was a balance on hand of \$2,352.40 and as of December 31, 1986 there was balance of \$2,628.33, both reports were approved as read.

The duties of the various committees were discussed and appointments were made. These appointments can be found in the current copy of the "Dirt."

The Election of Officers will be held on November 19 and Ladies Night will be held on December 17 at which time the Installation of Officers will be held.

Don Otterness, suggested that the club start a Junior Membership within our club, of young boys up through the age of 18 years. Nothing definite was acted upon at this meeting.

Ferd Johnson reported that the "Dirt" Advertising Committee had to return \$30.00 to True Value Hardware, their Ad being inadvertently omitted from the new advertising page.

The Club Tax Exempt status is one step closer to being a reality. **Al Miller** is taking care of this matter.

Don Gwinn proposed that we make a cash donation of \$200.00 to the Cerebral Palsy Telethon, which was passed unanimously. This will be presented in person by **Al Miller** to the Master of Ceremonies as the program is being televised. Members of the Committee and from the Club will be manning the telephones at 2:00 on Channel 10.

The January meeting will be at Veeders with Scrod or Beef at \$10.00. The speaker will be **Bob Beyfuss** from the Greene County Co-operative Ext, the topic is Organic Gardening.

Al Miller reported that a large sum of money was spent on the repair of his wife's electric typewriter, on which the "Dirt" is typed. **Jack Spear** made a motion which was carried to present Al with a check of \$25.00 to help with the expenses

Al was given the go-ahead to revise and have printed, a new batch of membership application forms. He was also authorized to order a quantity of Stationery with our Club Letterhead, in black print.

Al still had the floor and he suggested that the Club present some Libraries in the area with subscriptions of the Gardener. **Jack Spear** was asked to look into this.

It was suggested that the Bronze Medal of Recognition be presented to one of our own members on a yearly basis to create more enthusiasm within the membership.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20.

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 - 35 years ago" **Thanks, Tom Baker!!!**

GARDEN CLUB of ALBANY CLUB ACTIVITIES

Adopt-a-Highway - 25 years

We had a good run... We started our Adopt A Highway program back in 1994 by building a raised bed out of Hemlock and lots of rebar. Ten years later in 2004 - we built a raised bed that would last a lifetime. Unfortunately when construction started on the Exit 7 bridge off of I-90 our concrete base, block structure, soil and flower bulbs mysteriously disappeared leaving only the steel we drove down 5 feet to keep the Very thick concrete base from heaving.. **Ken Abele** played a key role in the design and construction of our second raised bed on I-90 at Exit 7

Westbound. Built to last This was build as a Memorial to an outstanding member - **Mr. Conrad (Connie) Robert**. This project took years to get State and Federal approvals and lots of hard work from members of the Garden Club of Albany. ps. If you know who borrowed our several thousand pound raised bed - **please ask them to return it**. Perhaps someone with big boy toys on site while working on the bridge knows. Thanks!!!

Built to last... Destroyed in hours

Adopt-a-Highway - 25 years - continued



**Someone that was working on the bridge at Exit 7 of I-90 knows where it is.
This was our Memorial to Mr. Conrad (Connie) Robert**

**Albany International Airport
Don Wrieden – Chairman**



Memorial Garden

At the Albany County Cooperative Extension
15 Martin Road Voorheesville, NY

Joe Huth / Chuck Scott Memorial Garden
Chairmen

For many years, our club has maintained a beautiful Memorial Garden as a tribute to our "Gardeners Gone to Rest."



Along with perennials, shrubs and trees, there are plaques that lists the names of our club members that have Gone to Rest.

**Joe Huth
Summer
2021**



**Chuck Scott
(left)
Summer
2021**





**Memorial Garden
At CCE Albany
Ken Abele
Russ Greenman
Bill Danish**



**President
Joe
Raggio
Summer
2021**

**Memorial Garden
At CCE Albany
the early days**

**Memorial Garden
At CCE Albany
Tom Baker**



**Bill
Stoneman**

**Jack
Meagher**

**Memorial Garden
At CCE Albany
Joe Herman
Al Miller**





Gardening from the Heart - 35 years at the **Center for Disability Services**

Volunteers include: **Russ Greenman, Greg**

Goutos,

Joe Huth, Jack Meagher, and Don Wrieden.

35 = years supporting one location and for years, two locations Every Wednesday

4 = the (low) average number of MGCA volunteers on site

50 = sessions per year and for years 100 sessions per year (50 /site)

2 = Hours on site per session – 9:00am – 11:00am

= ~15 years x 50 weeks/year x 4 people / site x 2 sites === 6000 volunteer hours

PLUS

= 20 years x 50 weeks/year x 4 people / site x 1 sites === 4000 volunteer hours

===== **10,000 hours of volunteer's time supporting the Gardening From The Heart program at the Centers for Disability Services by members of the Men's Garden Club of Albany.** =====

Add to that, prep time, construction of a huge greenhouse and many raised beds and you'll see that the 10,000 hours is only a portion of the time our members have spent supporting this great program.

We owe a big thanks to **Al Miller** and **Tom Baker** for initiating this project back in 1984.

Tom Baker and **Al Miller** started working on founding the Gardening From the Heart program way back in 1984 but he may say that it really didn't start until 1985. Originally our club had two teams of members that would teach classes, every Wednesday, at two locations with the adults at 700 S. Pearl St. in Albany and with the children at 314 Manning Blvd in Albany, NY. COVID-19 restrictions kept us out of the building, and we're waiting to hear what the next steps are for our activities at the 700 South Pearl St. location.



DATES TO REMEMBER

Today!	Please visit our friends that need our visits and cards
Tuesdays 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Myers Middle School Garden Club The Vegetable Project at Myer's Middle School 100 Elbel Court, Albany 12209 Please reach out to Bill Stoneman prior to attending: thevegetableproject@gmail.com or 518-728-6799
Thursday, January 20th 7:00 pm One week early	Martie Teumim , will be presenting the topic--" Gardening in a Changing Climate Join Zoom Meeting
Thursday, February 24th 7:00 pm	Amy from Gade Farm , will be presenting the topic--" New Plants for 2022 Join Zoom Meeting
Thursday, February 3 rd @ 7:30 pm	Director's meeting – via Zoom. Members are welcome to join in. reply to this email and we'll send you the link when it becomes available.
Saturday, March 12, 2022	Spring Garden Day via Zoom Cornell Cooperative Extension - Rensselaer County

Editor: **Russ Greenman**

Amazon purchases can support or club

Go to smile.amazon.com

Log into your Amazon account and Select **Men's Garden Club of Albany**

Support your favorite charity at no extra cost when you shop at smile.amazon.com.

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>

Special thanks to **Paul Zimmermann** for our terrific website

<http://www.gardenclubofthecapitaldistrict.org/>

Go ahead - click on it - you'll be glad you did.

Thanks **Paul Zimmermann!!!**

We continue to welcome 501(c)3 deductible donations that can be dedicated to support our **Memorial Garden**, or the **Joe Herman Scholarship Fund**.

Please send your 501(c)3 tax deductible donation to **Russ Greenman** GCCD Treasurer

Please call **Russ Greenman** at (518) 477-8321 for details

*In Memory
Of My
Loving Wife, Young
Bruce Wilcox*

*In Memory of
Louis Meo
&
Richard Stankus*

*In Memory of
Al & Barbara Miller
Dave & Phil Harris
Bill Barr
Christian & Mildred Lebrecht
Ed Tompkins
Avrom Koblenz*

*In Memory of my parents
John and Carrie Meagher
They both loved Plants and Flowers
Jack Meagher*

*In Memory of
Grandpa & Great Grandpa
Carroll W. Greenman
Russ, Maria, and Carl*

*In Memory of
Wally Dillenbeck
and
Don Otterness
By Tom Baker*

*In Memory of
Bill Town
Joe Herman*

*In Memory of
my Dad
Carroll W. Greenman
Bob*



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