

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 8 digital edition 5

Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. — Raleigh, NC

May 2024

The Only Thing Missing from the GWC Picnic Is You!

by Kathleen Thompson, Immediate Past President and Tom Packer, President



It's that time again! Our annual picnic and plant exchange happens on Tuesday, May 21st, starting at 6:00 PM. We give thanks to Mark and Joanne Boone who, once again, are hosting this event in their beautiful backyard and garden. It's always exciting to see what's growing in their gardens, the vegetables, perennials and the changes they've made since last

year's picnic. Touring their garden encourages me to grow more plants, do a better job of planning, and pick up a few tricks that I can incorporate in my own garden. The address is [4401 Dewees Court, Raleigh NC, 27612](https://www.google.com/maps/place/4401+Deweese+Court,+Raleigh,+NC+27612) (click for a map). There is an entrance gate with ample parking to the right off Ebenezer Church Road directly adjacent to the Richland Creek Bridge.

Dinner will be catered by *Pam's Farmhouse Restaurant* and the menu will be as tasty as always with two main dish choices and all the trimmings. Shay Campbell will be offering wine tastings of his famed House of Campbell collection. Everyone is encouraged to bring a favorite appetizer or dessert. Reservations and payment must be made in advance, **BEFORE May 14th** (to reserve and pay ONLINE click the appropriate payment links below or use the payment links available on the GWC website). Prices this year are unchanged from 2023.

Pay now by clicking the appropriate link(s) below:

- [\\$10 for each Clubmember](#)
- [\\$10 for one guest](#) of a Clubmember
- [\\$5.00 each for children 12 and under](#)
- [\\$21 for each nonmember or additional guests](#)

Payment by check also can be mailed to our Club Treasurer, Shay Campbell at 2717 Blaydon Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606, as long as it is received BEFORE May 14th.

Payment can't be accepted at the door because we have to pay the caterer in advance for a specific number of reserved meals.

Marvelous May!

May is a special month for the GWC because May's when our Club's Annual Picnic and Plant Exchange occurs. It's a custom that harkens back to our organization's very beginnings. This year the event will be catered by *Pam's Farmhouse Restaurant* who will serve a delicious spread including two main dishes and several sides. Going back to previous traditions, we suggest members bring an appetizer or dessert to share. The doors open about 6:00 PM for schmoozing and socializing with dinner served around 6:30-ish. The cost is a bargain at 10 dollars per member and must be paid IN ADVANCE and BEFORE May 14th (pay ONLINE or send checks to Club Treasurer, Shay Campbell at 2717 Blaydon Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606.). **Remember, there are NO ticket sales at the door.** This year's event is scheduled on the traditional third Tuesday of the month—that's May 21st at the beautiful home of Mark and Joanne Boone located in Raleigh at [4401 Dewees Court](https://www.google.com/maps/place/4401+Deweese+Court,+Raleigh,+NC+27612) (click for a map). As always, the evening wraps up with the justly famed stampede and plant exchange. Don't miss the long-awaited annual return of a magnificent classic!

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Club Officers and Committees

Board members

President: Tom Packer

Vice President: Mark Boone

Secretary: Joanne Boone

Treasurer: Shay Campbell

Immediate Past President: Kathleen Thompson

At-large board members: Rob Bartos, Gail Posey, Nell Joslin, Charlie Leverett

Committee members

Activities Chair: Jim and Rita Shaloiko (seed swap), Christine Elliott and Marion Flint (refreshments), Joanne Boone (picnic), Kathleen Thompson (awards banquet)
Audit: Charles Gilliam, Mac Williams, Reed Elliott

Azalea Sale: Charlie Leverett

Beautification Awards: Jeremiah Stoneburner

Club Awards: TBA

Endowment Investment: Charles Gilliam, Mark Boone, Charlie Leverett

Friendship: Debbie Leverett

Historical: Donna Farmer

Membership: Nell Joslin

Newsletter Editor: Reed Elliott

Nominating: Jim Moore

Programs: Mark Boone

Projects: Sharon LaRusch, Lynn Swanson

Publicity: Charles Gilliam

Scholarship: Tom Packer

Webmaster: Reed Elliott

Contact Us

For additional information email our Club at GardenersofWakeCountyNC@gmail.com

Our Club webpage is online at <https://gardenersofwakecounty.weebly.com/>

Online membership applications are at: <https://form.jotform.com/232744428653158>

The Only Thing Missing from the GWC Picnic Is You! *(continued from page 1)*

As a note, the catered picnic actually costs a lot more than \$10 per member. It's profits from the Annual Azalea that make up the difference. The bargain member price is our Club's way of saying "Thank You" to the many members who volunteered their time and effort to help out with this year's very successful Azalea Sale that also makes all our scholarships and Club activities possible!

Of course, the usual 50/50 drawing will be held. Tickets are \$1.00 apiece or 7 tickets for \$5.00 and can be purchased (cash only) on the night of the picnic. What a deal! Some lucky member will go home with half the purse. It could be you! So bring some cash to join in the drawing.

Finally, the traditional **PLANT EXCHANGE** (and free-for-all melee) will be held after everyone is fully stuffed. Please have your plants labeled. Everyone is encouraged to bring three plants (or a dozen) to exchange with fellow members. You don't have to bring plants to play, that's okay, too—others always bring extra. Be prepared to leave with one to three new plants! It's not too early to be thinking about the plants you want to dig up from your garden to share.

The same rules apply as in the past:

- All participants have to stay behind the starting line until the signal to "go" is given.
- Only one plant per participant, per trip.
- No holding, pushing, eye-gouging or tripping!
- No special treatment for ladies. This is an equal opportunity event.
- Cheaters will be put to work washing dishes.

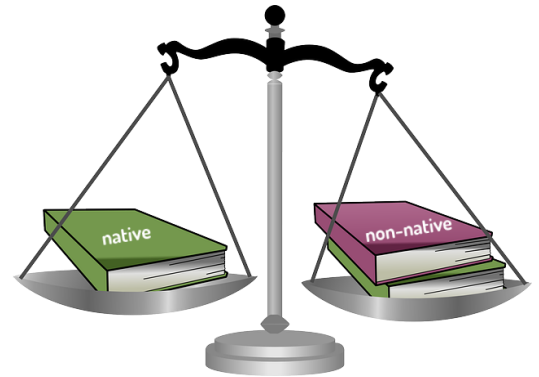
Finally, those who can, please stay after the plant exchange to help with the clean-up. Many hands make light work and the best way to thank the Boones is to leave their yard as neat as we found it.



Native vs. Non-native—All or Nothing?

by Tom Packer, President

During the recent azalea sale, I had a conversation with a new club member about what she was thinking about planting in her yard this spring. After discussing the features of her yard and what plants would do well, both native and non-native, she stopped me and expressed her relief at being able to talk about planning non-natives and that she was feeling guilty about considering planting non-native plants. Last month's speaker, Brie Arthur, presented in detail how she was focusing on native plants in her newly expanded yard space, but to her credit also made it known that non-natives can have a role in our gardens as well.



The USDA lists benefits of native plants as including, "... conserving water, protecting soil from erosion, and creating habitat and providing food for many different animals including birds, pollinators, and small mammals. Simply by growing native plants gardeners can bring enormous beauty to a community and joy to its residents. In addition, native plants are easy-to-grow and require minimal maintenance." Plus, it is a fun challenge to seek out and find plants considered to be native.

Of course, the definition of what makes a plant "native" is a subject for discussion and what adds interest to the subject. Most of the definitions seem to depend on when certain areas became inhabited by particular peoples. A gardener could well go down the rabbit hole of the origin of humans, and plants, so it's probably best to pick a dividing line with which you are comfortable and just go with that.

However, as much as we support and endorse the use of native plants, however you define them, some local groups advocate for the total elimination of non-native plants in our yards, a position which inevitably leads to some confusion and mixed feelings on the part of gardeners.

While none of us want to advocate for the use of invasive species, whether they are native (although invasive natives are referred to as "aggressive" instead of invasive) or non-native, there are reasonable people in the horticultural world who support the use of non-native plants so as not to be horticulturally xenophobic. The JC Raulston Arboretum, where our club holds its monthly meetings, advocates for the use of non-native, along with native, plants in our gardens. JC Raulston himself, as well as subsequent Arboretum Directors, travel the world to bring back plants to see if they will grow well in our area and increase the biological variety of our gardens. The JCRA Gardens Manager has noted that, "It is not the case that being a North Carolina native plant means that it will thrive planted in a North Carolina garden" and that "... most cultivated exotic ornamentals are not invasive."

It also should be kept in mind that the natural state of our area in the Central Piedmont is a huge, tightly packed pine tree forest, with the rest of the plants competing to survive in the shady undergrowth. Hiking through our natural areas, for example, Umstead Park, while peaceful and with its own beauty, is not a very colorful experience. Lastly, we don't know what environmental conditions lie ahead in our future. Diseases, insects and climate all have continually changed throughout history. However, we can only deal meaningfully with this future uncertainty by spreading the risk through biological diversity in our environment, which involves the use of both native and non-native plants.

So, if you want to go native in your yard, go for it! But, also feel guilt-free to add to the variety of your garden by using non-natives as well. Let's build bridges, not walls, to our wonderfully wide world of plants.

New Members—A Bumper Crop!

The Gardeners of Wake County welcomes anyone and everyone who loves gardens and gardening. This month we're happy to have added Paige Bivens of Wake Forest, Nicole, Dewey Brinkley and Jenny Bruce all of Raleigh, Windy and Tony Dongarra of Cary, Wedge and Mary Greene of Apex, and Sean Warchol of Knightdale. Be sure to say, "Hi and welcome" when you see them at the Club Picnic!

Sale-ing, Sale-ing at Joslin Gardens

by Sharon LaRusch and Lynn Swanson, Activities Co-chairs, and Nell Joslin Membership Chair



Earth Day 2024 found our group of GWC volunteers at Joslin for the spring plant sale. Shrubs, perennials, shade plants, vegetables and herbs were lined up for public sale to benefit the garden. GWC volunteers assisted customers with plant questions, made sure boxes and wheelbarrows were available to shoppers, and helped get plant purchases to customers' cars. Such a pleasant morning of visiting with each other and the public while talking plants, a favorite topic of ours! A micro crew continued the progress on the retaining wall and I popped up to see our blooming *Jeu de Paume*.



The plant sale at Joslin Garden was another success this year, in no small part due to the loyal GWC volunteers who helped with every aspect of the work on sale day. Some GWC members also donated plants to the sale. All sale profits will go straight into



the *Jeu de Paume*/
GWC pro-
ject fund at

the Garden. Thanks so much to those that came out to volunteer, came to visit the sale and continue to be enthusiastic supporters of our Club projects! It's been so rewarding to build friendships as we volunteer together! At the end of the sale we had no plants left! Anything remaining went to any GWC volunteer who expressed interest in them. Helen Yoest and Nell Joslin are extremely grateful for the support of this wonderful Club!

Next workday: Saturday, May 25th at Joslin Gardens!

On a separate note, our Club is a group with a servant's heart and love helping one another. The Share&Care project is still a current project and Lynn and I would love to find opportunities to help fellow club members!

RSVP if you plan to attend or have questions or if you'd like to discuss setting up a Share&Care. Sharon can be reached at sharonlarusch@gmail.com and Lynn's address is Chocolategardener@yahoo.com



Speaking of Sale-ing, Results Are in for the 2024 Az-A-Lee-Ah Sale

by Charlie Leverett, Azalea Sale Chair

We chuckle softly each year when occasional customers call azaleas “az-a-lee-ahs.” They are indeed beautiful. Impressively compelling in their attraction. They come in many colors, bloom styles and sizes, leaf shapes, plant sizes, bloom cycles, and deciduous or evergreen. A truly God-given, diverse plant of complex design and amazing presentation.

Now, to business. Drumroll please. What is the outcome of the 2024 sale? The outcome is even more impressive than last year and that’s saying a lot. We won’t have the exact figures until sometime in May, but it looks to be more than \$25,000 profit, which is about \$3,000 or more than last year’s already impressive number. We sold about 2,100 plants including 261 Wolfpack Reds of which we usually sell no more than 90 - 100. To my knowledge, that has never been done before. The Pack’s amazing Final 4 basketball season coming at the time of our Sale certainly didn’t hurt. Our sales-minded team saw the opportunity, jumped at the chance, and sold every last one of them. It certainly helped that this year featured some of the most beautiful Wolfpacks I’ve ever seen. We also sold 4 pallets (about 440 bags) of Black Kow amendment, which also may never have been done before. Profits from the Sale fund our scholarships, monthly speaker honorariums, rent for our space at JC Raulston, events like our picnic and awards dinner, and community service projects such as Share & Care and Joslin Gardens.



Fearless Leader Charlie Leverett retires the Wolfpack Red sign after the last one leaves the building!

Overall, the volunteer spirit in GWC was powerfully shown in the 2024 Azalea Sale from setting it up to winding it down. At the sale itself, about 1,173 volunteer hours were spent doing all the unloading, loading, helping customers, operating the cashier’s table, organizing, reorganizing, watering, and cleaning up. This was done by about 75 volunteers. Outside of the sale, volunteers put in about 409 hours setting up and closing the sale, beginning last August 2023 and ending this April 2024. This totals about 1,582 total volunteer hours of work. It takes a lot of people with a great volunteer spirit to accomplish that. It takes a lot of people and things to go right to have a successful sale, and we had a very successful one. Our Club’s many volunteers are worth more than all the money that could ever be earned at the Azalea Sale! Those who are of great character and willing to sacrifice and serve are priceless. THANK YOU ALL!!

The excitement and expectations always center around the deciduous azaleas. They are not readily available, and few are available locally. We trucked in most of our deciduous from two nurseries in the mountains – Riverdale Nursery in Newland, NC, and Carolina Native Nursery in Burnsville, NC. Carolina Native supplied the difficult to acquire seed propagated azaleas. This may be the first time in a long time that seed propagated azaleas have been available in central North Carolina. This just doesn’t happen regularly. The bottom line is our sale is not a successful sale without deciduous azaleas. Locally, Pender Nursery of Garner brought in a new line of deciduous azalea called Rhododendron Sunbow®. The Solar Flare™ and Solar Glow™ are the first two varieties in that line to be available in this area, and they are wonderful to behold. Many of the hybrid, seed propagated and Rhododendron Sunbow deciduous are fragrant. A real benefit.

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The 2024 Az-A-Lee-Ah Sale

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The traditional evergreen single bloomers are becoming harder and harder to find each year. Their numbers continue to slowly decline as availability drops.



The newest multi-blooming, sun loving Perfecto Mundo azaleas get a lot of attention. Our Azalea Sale wouldn't be the same without them. My observation is that the public is still making its mind up about this azalea. We feature new Encores at the sale, including Autumn Majesty and Autumn Starburst. Beauty, beauty, beauty!

If you like trivia, there are two plants that almost always sell out first. Guess what they are? The first to be mentioned is the evergreen traditional single bloomer Spider azalea. It is unique looking with long spider like leaves and white blooms. The buyer who comes in first will sometime buy most or even all of them. They are very hard to find. The second to be mentioned is the Encore Autumn Twist azalea, a multi-bloomer that can take a lot of sun, and which has a wonderful bloom that is bi-color white with purple. Wow, what beauty!

The most amazing and most beautiful thing about the sale is the PEOPLE OF GWC! Our gardeners love plants and love to serve the community with their sacrificial volunteer services to help our scholarship program and new gardeners. It is the most beautiful part of the sale, by far! We have a new emphasis on some young people in GWC. Anna Watkins' son Wyatt is so much fun to be with. He is learning slowly and helping with work to his ability. He will do anything for a Bojangles biscuit. So will Jennifer Midthun's two sons George and Walter. They were the ones getting down on their hands and knees marking the brick pavers with chalk doing layout work to begin the sale. That saved us old folks a lot of pain. I mean a lot of pain. When you see me smiling and they are around, you know why.

I have especially deep appreciation for those who are the bastions of the sale. We always have the experience and good sense of Mac and Vivian Williamson. Mark Willis and Shay Campbell (our Treasurer and head cashier), work all the time at the sale, and do lots of planning and prep thru the year with me. Mark Willis purchased the new carts, stenciled GWC on them all, and completed all the sign bases and painted them, plus he led the layout of the plant placement. Gail Posey always handles the plant signs and knows the ACB's (get the joke?) better than any of us. Mark Duerst retired this year and joined in the fun with his builder layout skills and organization. He and I love to poke fun at one another. Bill Boudman and Sam are clutch players, and can throw the jokes around, too. Devon Hull is a machine, an azalea sale machine, pleasant and nice, volunteering many days of the sale. Kathleen and Walt Thompson are as steady and fun as can be, and always bring along Jerry and Valerie Hackman. Likewise, Bill and Chris Maxwell are always there and can make room in their busy schedules to show up. We have some amazing people, and they make GWC great. Three people deserve special recognition. Charles Gilliam handles our social media advertising. He could sell Mark Zuckerberg a boat load of old computers and routers as the newest technology. Tom Packer is recognized now as the Voice of GWC. His radio personality is unmatched in GWC because none of us want to even be on the radio program *The Weekend Gardener* on WPTF, which he loves, and we are thankful for his work. He also contributes to various publications, including *Walter Magazine*, which covered our sale the last two years. Mark Boone has a second career now driving our truck with Charles Gilliam to pick up azaleas and bring them home from the far regions beyond. They represent our purpose and mission in their travels.

Many hands do indeed make light(er) work and we thank the many hands that did it in 2024! Finally, it is God himself who blessed us with this year's successful sale, arranging all the variables, bringing the right people, and creating the beautiful nature that we love so much. We give humble thanks to Him for our many blessings.

Meet the 2024 GWC Scholarship Award Recipients

by Christine Elliott, Scholarship Chair

One of our favorite GWC moments each year is the awarding of scholarships to hard-working and remarkable NCSU horticulture majors. After all the months of hard work preparing for and conducting our annual Azalea Sale, it's good to know that our efforts really do make a difference to real students. So, for starters, thanks to all the members who contributed to the success of this year's Azalea Sale. From the "heavy lifting" done by Charlie Leverett, Shay Campbell, Charles Gilliam and Mark Willis to the rest of us "best supporting actors," who moved and sold a lot of beautiful plants! Our efforts are an investment in the horticulture industry and in the young people who are its future. Thanks to the incredible work of our members on the Azalea Sales for the last two years, we are delighted to be able to provide four scholarships in the amount of \$2,500.00 to a diverse group of NCSU Horticulture students. I'd also like to take this moment to thank the Clubmembers who served on this year's scholarship selection committee. In alphabetical order these were Marion Flint, Mary Gibson, Devon Hull, and Jennifer Midthun. So, let's meet the GWC scholarship award winners for 2024! In alphabetical order:



Jack Bobo is graduate student at NC State working on his PhD in Horticulture and Soilless Substrates. He began his horticultural journey at Texas A&M where he was inspired by brilliant scientists working to solve great problems and realized he wanted to be a part of that process. Jack currently works at the Horticultural Substrates Lab at NC State 45 hours a week. His research addresses questions including sourcing of material, root development, substrate toxicity and its impact on overall plant health. He hopes his work will inform and elevate large-scale green industry, corporations and the general public, transforming them into well-

informed horticulturalists.

Andrea Garcia-Guerrero is a rising sophomore working toward her degree in Horticultural Science. She selected this course of study because it combines the opportunity for academic learning with doing something she really loves, working with plants. She aspires to share the importance and beauty of plants within her community in a way that is creative and science-based. Andrea works part time in the NC State Book Store when school is in session and full time at the Food Lion in Apex during school breaks and throughout the summer.



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Meet the 2024 GWC Scholarship Award Recipients (continued from page 7)



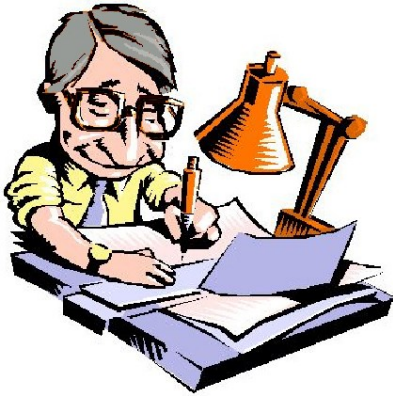
Norma Hernandez-Cruz transferred last winter from Wake Tech (with an Associate's Degree in Science) where she supported herself through full and part-time work. Now at NC State, she is working part time as an intern at Sage Ecological Services. The granddaughter of farmers, and the daughter of avid home gardeners, Norma is excited to be pursuing a degree that will turn a hobby into a career path. She is interested in plant breeding and plant production.

Erica Wallace will be a senior in the coming year. Her focus is on Landscape Design and Urban Gardens. Erica is interested in sustainable design, sustainable food systems and community gardens. She hopes to create gardens that serve as art, improve the well-being of visitors and enhance the natural environment. Erica works 15 hours a week at the JC Raulston Arboretum and this summer will be one of their horticulture interns. Erica is the third of four college-bound sisters, so she says scholarships really help her family.



My Corner of the Garden

by Reed Elliott, Editor



By now, most of us know that lawns of green grass aren't so "green" for the environment. Keeping turf from turning brown wastes water and requires use of toxic pesticides and herbicides that can contaminate the food we eat and water we drink. Keeping lawns at a reasonable height burns fossil fuels, releasing greenhouse gases and other pollutants into the atmosphere. There are plenty of alternatives. Chris and I are opting for dwarf mondo in our front yard.

Dwarf mondo grass makes a nearly ideal ground cover: it's easy to grow and doesn't require much attention. You won't have to mow, as dwarf mondo only grows to a certain (low) height. Also, you don't have to spread it with pesticides and other chemicals to keep it healthy. One big additional plus in Wake County is that mondo grass is resistant to deer: if you live near a forest, that can be a big added benefit. If you don't have the time or energy to maintain a lawn, but still like the idea of adding green coverage around your property, these plants can be a good option.

Mondo's downsides are few but they include growing somewhat slowly, meaning you might need a couple of years to create a solid lawn from plugs. Also, mondo grass is comparatively delicate; it doesn't withstand heavy foot traffic as well as turf. One way to get around this is to install stepping stones to create paths (see left side of picture below). Also, although deer don't like it, rabbits are willing to browse on mondo grass, but they're not too difficult to discourage with products like [Liquid Fence](#) (click the link to buy on Amazon).

Mondo lawns greatest claim to fame is that they are relatively easy to care for. Mondo grass thrives in filtered sunlight so consider locating it where the rays of the sun don't hit continuously. That said, the parts of our mondo grass lawn that are in nearly full sun seem perfectly happy so far (more than one year in). To improve soil conditions, you should plan on periodically top dressing using organic matter such as compost or manure spread lightly between clumps or worked in using a bit of light raking. Fertilizer isn't needed when growing this plant, nor is much watering required once the plants are fully established.

While you can grow mondo grass from seeds, you'll get a quicker start from buying and dividing small potted

plants. Propagation by division can help you make an entire lawn from relatively few plants. In fact, this is exactly the process Chris and I are using. We covered most of our front yard for about \$400. Here's a picture of part of our mondo grass lawn one year after planting.

