

# The Clod-Hopper



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Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. — Raleigh, NC

August 2020

## Foraging

*Mark Boone, Past President*

When I lived in Idaho, I used to go down by the irrigation canal and pick wild asparagus. It was as prolific as dandelions in North Carolina. Although most of the dandelion I dig up end up in the compost bin, some get eaten as a salad. The greens are pretty good with chopped wild onions. In the Triangle, one does not have to go far to find as many dandelions and wild onions as they would like to eat.



One of my favorite springtime activities is to look for blackberry vines in bloom and make a mental note as to where I saw them. Those blooms are the promise of a sweet berry pie in July. There is a good patch of vines near the NC Museum of Art which I suspect was left over from the time the property served as a prison. There is another along Edward Mills Road.

The ones by the Art Museum used to have huge cultivated berries but much to my chagrin they got mowed down a couple of years ago. Wild vines have taken their place. The new vines are prolific. The only issue is poison ivy almost as tall as the blackberry vines. As I was picking, I could hear the Coasters singing in my head about "Poison Iv-veee, Lord it makes you itch." When I was a boy, I used to pick blackberries with my grandmother. We would put Sulphur in our socks to reduce the number of chigger bites. Chiggers are also known as berry bugs for a reason. My dad used to say;

*A chigger isn't any bigger  
Than the point of a very sharp pin  
But the lump that it raises itches like blazes  
And that's when the scratching starts in.*



*continued on page 2*

## Club Meetings

This month, Dr. Eleanor Spicer Rice will be speaking on *Zoom* about Common Ants in the Garden. You may think you've seen ants. It seems like they're everywhere and, after all, an ant is an ant, right? But there is so much more to know about these tiny creatures. Did you know that for every human on earth there are about one million ants? They are among the longest living insects and some of the strongest. Eleanor tells this story from her childhood, "When I was little, I took my breakfast crumbs out to the front yard to feed the black carpenter ants. I built little piles of bacon and toast for them on top of oak leaves and waited for them to lumber out from holes hidden in the bark at the base of the trees." Her love of nature (and interest in ants) started at a young age.

As always, GWC members will receive a link via email to see the presentation live and text questions to our presenter. If you miss it, or more sadly still, if you're not already a GWC member, we'll post a recording a few days later on the GWC website. Better yet, join the GWC and watch it live!

## Club Officers and Committees

### Board members

President: Virginia (Ginny) Parker  
Vice President: Kathleen Thompson  
Secretary: Jim Moore  
Treasurer: Mac Williamson  
Immediate Past President: Paul Hoffman  
At-large board members: Leslie Cohen, Christine Elliott, Rich Engates, Eddie Robinson

### Committee members

Activities Chairs: Will Farmer, Reed & Christine Elliott (seed swap), Renee Engates (refreshments), Mark Boone (picnic), Ginny Parker (awards banquet)  
Audit: Charles Gilliam, Sharon LaRusch, Donna Farmer, Reed Elliott  
Azalea Sale: Charlie Leverett  
Beautification Awards: Laine Thomas  
Club Awards: Jim Moore  
Endowment Investment: Charles Gilliam  
Friendship: Donna Farmer  
Historical: Donna Farmer  
Membership, Barbara Brown  
Newsletter Editor: Reed Elliott  
Nominating: TBA  
Programs: Kathleen Thompson  
Projects: Sharon LaRusch, Lynn Swanson  
Publicity: Charles Gilliam  
Scholarship: Joanne Boone  
Telephone: Johnny and Sherrill Johnson  
Webmaster: Reed Elliott  
Immediate Past President: Paul Hoffman

## Contact Us

For additional information email our Club at [gardener@gardenersofwakecounty.org](mailto:gardener@gardenersofwakecounty.org)

Contact Ginny Parker, President, by phone at home: 919-832-5483 or by cell: 919-880-3233

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

## Foraging

*(continued from page 1)*

On July 4<sup>th</sup> Joanne and I picked a gallon or so of blackberries which she converted into pies. After picking we washed down with a quart of Isopropyl alcohol to get off the Poison Ivy oil and chiggers. Those wild berries made the pie taste so much sweeter than it would have if the berries had come from Harris Teeter. It could have been the added sugar, but I'm going with Urban foraging making the difference.

Although it is not quite the same as foraging for wild berries, I love hunting for things to plant in the garden while at the grocery store. The Grand Asian Market in Cary is one of my favorite places to look. Taro bulbs at \$0.65 per pound are a lot cheaper than Elephant Ears at the nursery at \$7.00 each. They come back every year and remind me what a good deal I got. I planted 8 daikon radishes in my woodland garden. They sprouted interesting foliage in a couple of days.

I've gotten so I buy virtually any kind of roots and tubers I see at the market and plant it to see what comes up. I can buy a pound of cilantro seeds for what a pack of 20 seeds cost at the seed store. The ginger roots and garlic grow predictably as do sweet potatoes. Recently I saw a new tuber called Kloï Mo for \$1.49 a pound. I bought one and just planted it. I have no idea what it will turn into. Maybe it will grow to heaven like Jack and the Bean Stalk beans and I can climb up and find a goose laying golden eggs. I'm sure that goose would be there if I foraged for mushrooms.



# Common Ants - and What You Should Know About Them

*by Kathleen Thompson, Vice President*



Our Gardeners of Wake County presenter for August is Eleanor Spicer Rice who will be speaking on *Zoom* about Common Ants in the Garden. Eleanor's presentation will begin at 7:30 on Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>. As usual, GWC members will receive a link via email so you can see the presentation live and text questions to Eleanor at the end. If you miss it, or more sadly still, if you're not already a GWC member, you'll get a second chance to see a recording of the presentation a few days later when a link will be posted on the GWC website.

So, you may think, you've seen ants. Sometimes they're everywhere and, after all, an ant is an ant. But there is so much more to know about these tiny creatures. Did you know that for every human on earth there are about one million ants? They are among the longest living insects and some of the strongest.

Eleanor Spicer Rice earned her PhD at NorthCaroline State University in entomology and is currently the senior editor of *Verdant Word*, a science communications company in Raleigh. She is the author of six books, including *Dr. Eleanor's Book of Common Ants* and *Becoming Durham*. In addition, she is a regular contributor to *Our State Magazine* and a frequent commentator on television for *The Discovery Channel*, *Netflix*, and *the Science Channel* as well as numerous public radio shows.

I found out that Dr. Eleanor is a nature nut. She tells this story from her childhood, "When I was little, I took my breakfast crumbs out to the front yard to feed the black carpenter ants living in the willow oak trees. I built little piles of bacon and toast for them on top of oak leaves and waited for them to lumber out from holes hidden in the bark at the base of the trees." Seems that her love of nature started at a young age.

This spring, Dr. Eleanor wrote an article in *Walter* magazine bringing to life the history of a magnificent willow oak, over 100 years old, that grew on Brooks Avenue, newly downed from a freak winter wind gust, and the stories that tree must have "seen" as it grew to its mighty stature. She is committed to sharing her passion for science, art, and the natural world, to do this, she writes and cultivates citizen science projects to help spread the joys of all things nature.

Eleanor and her husband Gregory live in the middle of Raleigh near the NC State University campus with their two little boys, ages 3 and 5, plus two dogs and 10 pigeons.



# Wimsy in the Rain

*Paul Hofmann, Immediate Past President*



In June we were able to go to the beach with the kids and grandkids. Judy's brother's daughter's husband's great aunt (not sure if that's the exact connection but it's close) owns a place four blocks off the ocean in south Carolina Beach. She has been kind enough to let us rent there several times at an affordable rate.

We were anticipating fun in the sun, but alas the rain clouds ruled as a storm system stalled over the coast for all seven days. Fun in the sun became fun and games. So one morning my son Joe and I were on the lookout for an alternate diversion. We googled and found that the "New Hanover County Arboretum and

Extension Service" on Oleander Drive in Wilmington was still open to the public during daylight hours even though Corona Virus reigned.

We set out on a drizzly morning to see what would happen and found a nearly empty parking lot and a collection of wonderful gardens to explore.



The arboretum itself is young, the vision of the county extension agent, opening for the first time in 1989 on a seven acre site of an old elementary school. Advice and a good portion of its original plantings were provided by professor JC Raulston from the new NCSU arboretum in Raleigh.

## Wimsy in the Rain

*(continued from page 4)*



The evidence is clear that even though these gardens are relatively new, they must be lovingly appreciated and maintained by a horde of volunteers from the New Hanover master gardeners (the arboretum also serves as headquarters for county extension service and education) and a Friends of the Arboretum organization. No weed could be located, bright colors abounded (as Joe would say the gardens “popped”), and plant, structure, sculpture, and water combined in whimsical ways.

Fitting it was that all other visitors had children, for even though there is a children’s garden especially for them, every individual area is laid out as a treasure for a child to find and discover: a pond (or rather a small lake) with Koi that swim over to see you, a Japanese garden with tea house and gurgling stream, a curving lawn to run on with bright benches for your mom, elves in the camellias, a memorial garden with flags raised to re-



member men and women who gave their lives for our freedom, green houses where plants are being propagated.

Joe and rate this experience as “two thumbs up.” Stop by when you visit Wilmington and enjoy!

# Gardener, DON'T Plant that Seed!

Sharon LaRusch, Projects Chair

Originally written by Minda Daughtry and subsequently updated by Rhonda Gaster. This article appeared on the [NC Cooperative Extension website](#).

Many people have received unsolicited packages from China labeled as containing earrings, but actually containing seeds. DO NOT plant these seeds as they could be a pathway for the introduction of invasive species, insects, and plant diseases.

This type of international shipment of plant material is unlawful and the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services asks anyone who received one of these unsolicited foreign shipments to save the contents along with all shipping labels and contact the Plant Industry Division toll-free at 800-206-9333 or email at [newpest@ncagr.gov](mailto:newpest@ncagr.gov). Plant Industry staff will contact you to gather information



and pick up the package.



North Carolina residents are not in violation of any regulations if they received these shipments, but they are the key to identifying and stopping future shipments. If you should receive a seed package in the mail do the following:

Place the contents in a zip-lock bag. Call the Extension office at 919-775-5624. Hold the material and we will have a staff member contact them to pick up the seed.

The citizens will need to include their contact information:

- Name
- Address
- City
- Phone number

Learn More from the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

# My Corner of the Garden

by Reed Elliott, Editor

This month I'm turning *My Corner* over to a couple of fellow Clubmembers and great gardeners, Sherrill and Johnny Johnson. Their wonderful story appears in the summer edition of WakeMed's [Heart to Heart Magazine](#) and is reproduced here.



*The garden is where Johnny and his wife of 35 years, Sherrill, spend most of their time – even in the colder months of January and February, which are when his symptoms began. While there's not too much to do in the garden during the winter, they continued to spend time on garden maintenance and basic upkeep. But for Johnny, the work seemed to feel just a bit more difficult than usual.*

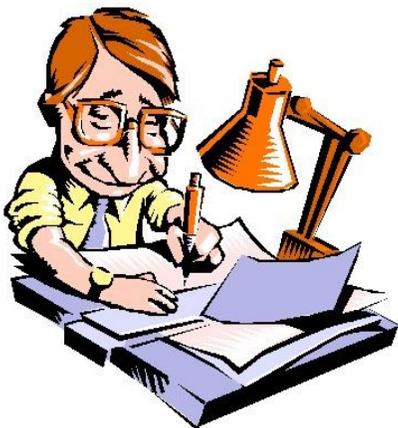
*"After 44 years as a power lineman, I thought my parts were just worn out," he explains. "I didn't feel much different – but now that I look back, I guess things that used to be easy for me that I've been doing forever just started to feel harder."*

*Fortunately for Johnny, his wife had a keen listening ear. He came back from the mailbox complaining of an unusual tightening in his throat. She noticed he was short of breath, too, and called his cardiologist who promptly scheduled Johnny for a stress echo test and further evaluation.*

*On March 3, 2020, Johnny had an aortic valve replacement and a triple bypass. After a six-night hospital stay, Johnny was discharged feeling great just as COVID-19 came on the scene in North Carolina. With cardiac rehab cancelled due to social distancing guidelines, Johnny took long walks with his wife and spent time outdoors in the garden.*

*"I'm very fortunate that between my wonderful wife and my garden, I have everything I need right here at home," Johnny explains. He credits many of their family's happiest days to the garden, which includes seasonal veggies, flowers, ornamental plants, pollinators, as well as a water garden and pond area they built.*

*"I remember the grandkids splashing their feet in that pond and the beautiful sound of their giggles when the fish 'kissed' their feet. Gardening has kept us young, active and happy." Today, Johnny and Sherrill are thankful for both their garden and the exceptional care they received.*



Having Johnny back in the garden, hale and hearty, is a blessing to all of us in the GWC. Thank you, Wake-Med!

## New Members

The Gardeners of Wake County welcomes anyone and everyone who loves gardens and gardening. Does that describe you? If so, c'mon down and join the Club. Download a Membership Application on the GWC website or contact our Membership Chair, Barbara Brown, at 517 Wyndham Drive, Fuquay-Varina, NC 27526-7706.