

The Clod-Hopper



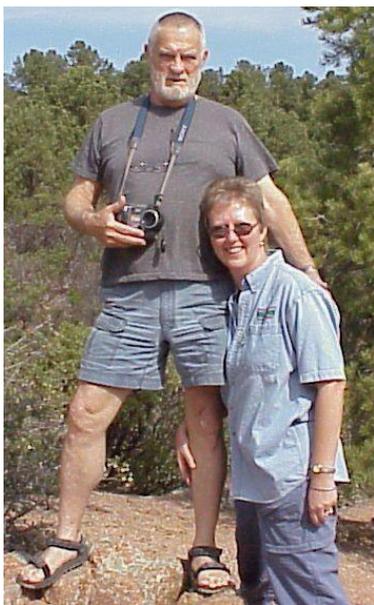
Volume 3, digital edition 12

Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. — Raleigh, NC

December 2019

When Farmers Become Gardeners

Christine Elliott, Friendship Chair



If you've ever been to a GWC seed exchange, you've seen Will Farmer in action. His enthusiasm for gardening in general, for mini-greenhouses made from recycled Costco rotisserie chicken containers, and for sharing seeds for growing the biggest squash you will ever see outside the County Fair, is legendary. With the last name of Farmer, it seems a given he would love to grow things. Will and Donna for years maintained a large productive home vegetable garden, starting most of their plants from seed in little the greenhouses he is so fond of

sharing. They had 8 raised beds and grew enough to fill the pantry with canned goods for the winter.



Will and Donna downsized this last year and are trying to keep it simple. That can be harder to do than say. Will reports with some regret, that this was the first year of his adult life that he didn't grow tomatoes from seed. The soil in the new yard needed a lot of soil preparation. In the short run,

there was good ol' Black Cow from Campbells Nursery. They tried the "lasagna" style of layering straw, compost and soil to get a basic vegetable garden going. In the new yard they are also growing azaleas and Rose of Sharon.

Although Will "bounced around a lot" as a kid growing up, his grandparents and aunt and uncle ran a family farm. He started growing tomatoes himself

Club Meetings

In most months our Club meets at the JC Raulston Arboretum but December isn't "most months." In fact, in December we gather for a feast and friendship at the NCSU University Club. It's also the time when the GWC presents important awards for service to the Club, the Community, and to some deserving North Carolina State University students who exemplify the coming generation of horticulture specialists. This year our annual Christmas Banquet and Awards Ceremony will be held at the NCSU University Club on Tuesday, December 10th. There's an open (cash) bar and socializing begins around 6:00. The Banquet commences at 7:00. The price for members is \$19.00 each for the first two. Additional guests are \$50.00 each. Those who haven't paid in advance can pay at the door with cash or check. If you haven't made a reservation, please contact Ginny Parker immediately at 919-832-5483 or by cell: 919-880-3233 so she can have an accurate head count for the dinner.

continued on page 2

Club Officers and Committees

Board members

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

Committees

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

Contact Us

For additional information email our Club at 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/>

When Farmers Become Gardeners

(continued from page 1)

in 7th grade. He tried growing corn that year, but didn't know it needed to be planted in rows! He was a fast learner.

Donna, on the other hand, grew up on Talahi Island near Savana, Georgia. Her dad build their house and the island had maybe 50 residents. It sounds like a pretty idyllic place to grow up. Gardening was not a part of island life. Obviously, living with Will gave her a crash course in vegetable gardening and in preserving what they grew.

Over the years, Donna has served in a number of GWC positions, most recently as historian and on the budget committee. Both she and Will volunteer regularly for club activities, including the azalea sale and our recent opportunity to work at the County Fair. Will started and continues to update the "Meet Up" site for our Club, and through it, attracts many new visitors to our meetings.



Thank you, Will and Donna, for your enthusiasm, generosity of spirit, and positive energy.

My Favorite House Guest

by Paul Hoffman, Immediate Past President



At the Club meeting last week, I felt like I was showing Tony Avent a picture of his own grandchild. I'd seen the plant's parent in the Plant Delights catalog about eight years ago accompanied by Tony's own description:

"The year was 2008...I was walking through the Home Depot parking lot in Phoenix, Arizona, gazing at the median strip plantings of yellow-edged *Agave desmettiana*, when I spied one plant that stood out from the others. The mutated plant had much wider than normal golden yellow margins surrounding each soft, fleshy green leaf. I returned home with a pup which produced a slowly offsetting specimen to 3' tall x 3' wide that we are pleased to finally introduce as *Agave desmettiana* 'Desert Sunset'."

I made a mental note and paid to adopt one of the pups on my next trip to the nursery. It came with roots tightly packed in one of Plant Delights distinctive $\frac{3}{4}$ qt blank containers. Transplanted into larger and larger pots over the years, it seems to like living under my neglectful regimen. The only special attention it gets is moving indoors in a sunny window room before frost and then back outdoors onto the southern facing deck in the spring. Oh, and it also gets a little drink of water every couple of weeks while inside.

The result in this instance at least is just what Tony described, a 3' x 3' extremely attractive, and well behaved house guest that makes no demands and never complains or misbehaves. I sometimes just sit and contemplate the gracefulness with which it holds itself, content to be at peace and well satisfied with its surroundings.

I took a look this morning in the catalog and unfortunately there are no more cousins being offered for sale. I have several other *desmettianas* now that share the good family behaviors of "Desert Sunset" and have more children which I would be willing to share, but none show off the glowing "golden yellow margins" of 'Desert Sunset.'



Christmas Comes to Longview

by Sharon LaRusch and Lynn Swanson

We weren't able to have our November workday due to impending rain—not a great weather forecast when spreading lime was on the itinerary. We now hope to move that task to December, along with a more exciting one—planting some trees! We're still awaiting completion of some major work by Wake Med's landscaper including relaying the brick pathway. Because equipment and labor will need to access the entire length of the garden walk for this task, we need to hold off planting along the path until that is accomplished.



In the meantime, however, we have identified an area where we can do some planting right away. At the far west side of the path is a large, glorious old beech tree. There will be a view to this tree and a small, casual path leading to it. On either side of the tree, there will be trios of *Osmanthus* to screen adjoining properties. *Osmanthus fragrans*, or fragrant tea olive, is a large evergreen shrub that makes a nice background plant. In the fall, add to that a delightful fragrance from the small white flowers that are barely noticeable on a large plant. The fragrance, something akin to apricots, carried on a breeze is enough to make one search out the source. We will install plants that are 4 ½ - 5 feet tall on our upcoming December workday.

We sometimes think of holly in association with Christmas, and the birds certainly notice once the berries begin ripening. American holly (*Ilex opaca*) were on the original plan for the Garden Walk at Longview. This is a large-growing, native holly. Often too big for the typical home landscape, it is a great plant for a public space. Our new plan calls for a group of American holly at the far end of the path. The major clearing accomplished at Longview opened up a view of Kidd Road. By planting a grouping of holly at the very end of the walk, we will have a nice backdrop for the rest of the garden walk, and good screening from Kidd Road. We look forward to enjoying these plants in a future December at Longview.



Our soil sample results from eight specific areas from our new garden plans also just came in. All areas need lime but there are also a few of areas needing fertilizer just before we plant. Just because soil is resting doesn't mean it will be replenished automatically in that process. The large trees that have now been cleared certainly absorbed nutrients.

NCDA&CS Agronomic Division		Phone: (919) 733-2655	Website: www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/	Report No. FY20-SL010984
	Predictive Home & Garden	Client: Sharon Larusch 106 Thresher Court Cary, NC 27513	Advisor:	
	Soil Report	Mehlich-3 Extraction Sampled County: Wake	Client ID: 439038	Advisor ID:
Sampled: 10/19/2019	Received: 10/22/2019	Completed: 10/30/2019	Farm:	
Agronomist's Comments: This report provides Test Results and Recommendations for each sample submitted for testing. Look for Lime Recommendations and N-P-K Fertilizer Recommendations. The lime recommendation is always listed next to the first crop and will be based on the higher target pH if the pH targets for crop 1 and crop 2 differ. Application at the indicated rate will raise soil pH to the optimal level for the plant you specified and should be sufficient for 2 to 3 years, depending on soil type. Common target pH values are as follows: 5.0 for azalea, camellia, rhododendron and mt. laurel; 5.5 for centipede/grass; 6.0 for other lawn grasses, shrubbery, and flowering plants; and 6.5 for vegetable gardens. N-P-K Recommendations are based on the nitrogen (N) needs of the plants being grown and the soil test results for phosphorus (P-I) and potassium (K-I); a 50 to 70 index for either is optimum. If the exact fertilizer cannot be found, find the closest match and adjust the rate accordingly. Refer to "Understanding the Soil Report" (last page of this report) for additional explanation and links to helpful information.				

Thanks again to all for your commitment to Longview. We look forward to another workday on December 14th! Plan on bringing your lime spreaders. That's a Christmas present that will keep on giving to the Garden Walk at Longview!

Wells and Medicinal Plants

by Mark Boone, Past President

When I turn on my faucet, drinkable water comes out. The only exception is when the electricity is off, and the well pump is not working. That's remedied by plugging in the generator.

Recently I took a trip to the Central African Republic (CAR) which sits 4 degrees north of the equator and directly in the center of Africa from east to west. There, women frequently walk hours to find water and carry it back on their head to their village. Outside the capitol of Bangui there is no electricity. Roads are dirt and have deep gullies. Rain is heavy. I have a new appreciation for the song "Rains down in Africa".

Several years ago, I raised money to dig wells in the CAR. One of these wells is located in a Pygmy village in an area called Berberati. If a freeway existed, it would take about an hour to get there from the capitol. Since there is only a one lane dirt road through what was formally the rain forest before the mahogany trees were cut down, it took six hours of bouncing up and down to reach the village. The well gets used from sunup to sundown. It eliminates the need to walk long distances .

What is left of the rain forest is filled with more butterflies than a butterfly green house exhibition. Red, yellow, iridescent blue, and orange butterflies in a myriad of sizes flutter about.



Local people collect medicinal plants and make everything from a Viagra substitute to a tea that treats back pain. They showed me two vines that looked identical to me. One will pour out clean water good for drinking when cut. The other has sap so poisonous a flesh wound from an arrow dipped in this poison will quickly kill a monkey.

The Pygmies grow manioc in the clearings. The root is edible after it is peeled and soaked in water for 3 days to remove the arsenic. It is then dried and ground into a paste. The smell can best be described as body odor times 10. Manioc has little nutritional value but does fill the stomach. The greens are higher in nutrition. As a gardener I wanted to offer advice from my vegetable garden back home. I reframed from doing so.

There were exotic flowers for which I wish I knew the name, and some plants which in Raleigh I consider to be weeds. I wondered if they somehow were accidentally brought here and have naturalized.

Traveling certainly opens one's eyes.

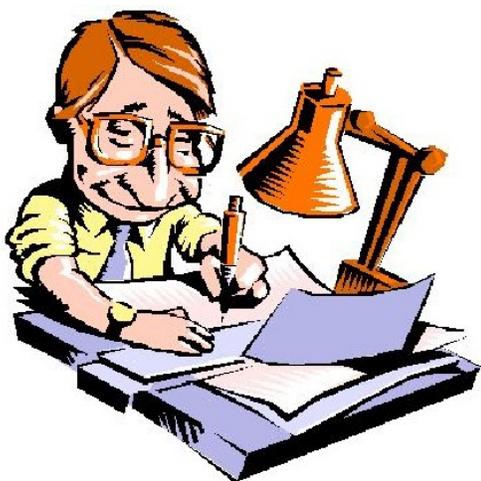


My Corner of the Garden

by Reed Elliott, Editor

The Holiday Season is upon us and I want to remind everyone that in December the Gardeners of Wake County don't have our usual meeting at the JC Raulston Arboretum. Rather, in December, we gather for our Club's annual Awards Banquet and Feast at the [NC State University Club](#). Follow the link for a map if you're unsure of the location. The date is Tuesday, December 10th. The doors open at 6:00. The trouble begins at 7:00. An open (cash) bar will be available. The price for members is a bargain at \$19.00 each for the first two. Guests after that have to pay what it actually costs to put on an event of this quality—\$50.00 each. You can pay at the door but only if you previously let Ginny Parker know you were planning on being there. Ginny has to place our order for food and tables in advance, so places are reserved only for those who reserved a place. If you're running late and haven't made a reservation yet, call Ginny immediately at 919-832-5483 or by cell: 919-880-3233 and plead, whine and beg. Maybe it's not too late.

The Awards Banquet is famous for four things. First, it's an amazing, bargain-priced feed! If you haven't attended one, be sure to eat light on the 10th. You'll need all the tummy space you can get because you'll see so many good things to eat you won't know where to start or when to stop! Second, the University Club at Christmas is beautiful. The hall is decorated lavishly every year with garlands, wintery flower arrangements, wreaths, a lovely fully-lit tree and all the trimmings. Third, you'll be sharing this celebration with some of the finest people you know—your friends and fellow gardeners of the GWC. A feast with folks like these is truly something special. Finally, this is the moment when our Club fulfills one of its most important functions—acknowledging the gardeners and gardens that make our world more beautiful and awarding well-deserved scholarships to six inspiring NC State Horticulture majors. We'll hear their stories and we'll meet them. They are the future of gardening and we're helping to grow that future. Taken altogether, I can't think of a better way to put my head and my heart into the joy of the Holiday Season. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at this year's GWC Awards Banquet!



I also want to take a moment to remind everyone that rapidly-approaching January is the time for the now-legendary *GWC Annual Seed Exchange*. "Sharing seeds, knowledge, and tricks of the trade" - that's how good-looking, man-about-town, and event host Will Farmer describes the justly famous occasion. For those who attend, all this comes with the wintertime expectation that something marvelous will happen in the spring. Best of all, the plants and seeds are free. An outgrowth of seed swaps first done for TAGaH (Triangle Area Gardeners & Homesteaders), GWC's annual event began in 2014 and continues to be one of the most popular activities on the yearly Club calendar. Start saving those seeds now!

New Members

The Gardeners of Wake County welcomes anyone and everyone who loves gardens and gardening. This month we're happy to have added Tom Lawson, Jackie Seamster and Janie Schwab, all of Raleigh to our GWC family. Be sure to say "Hi and welcome" when you see them at the next meeting. And a correction—last month we misspelled new member Roxanna Evans' first name. It's Roxanna, not Rozanne. Sorry Roxanna!