

The Clod-Hopper



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Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. — Raleigh, NC

June 2018

A Trip to Big Bloomers

by Paul Hoffman, President

One of my favorite short excursions in springtime is the drive down to Sanford to visit Big Bloomers Flower Farm. Big Bloomers is special place for plant lovers due to the huge variety of plants they offer at very reasonable prices. Big Bloomers is an actual farm that grows the plants they sell. Offerings include house plants, trees, shrubs, succulents, seasonal annuals, and most of all, an outstanding selection of perennials.



When I arrive, I first take quite a bit of time wandering through the retail greenhouses (17 in all), looking for plants I have not seen before. The perennials are organized by groups (sun/shade, vines) and within the



group are arranged in alphabetical order by scientific name. If you come with a shopping list, it's fairly easy to find what you're looking for.

There typically are 10 to 20 pots for each variety or cultivar offered. Some are small and marked "not for sale" having just been potted by the staff – remember this is where they actually grow the plants, not just sell them. Each variety is

marked with a small sign giving the important information (scientific and common names, hardiness zones, flowering times, etc.) to help you decide whether the plant is a good fit for your garden.

Club Meetings

Monthly meetings are at 7:30 PM at the JC Raulston Arboretum every 3rd Tuesday. Refreshments and socializing begin at 7:00.

At our next meeting on June 19th, guest speaker, North Carolina Bluebird Society President Ken Kernodle, explains why bluebirds are good residents in our gardens and will offer tips on enticing them to join us. Backyard horticulturists love bluebirds because they are voracious insect eaters, capable of quickly ridding a garden of pests. Their bright blue and red plumage also makes them an attractive and enthralling sight among the flowers. This will be a presentation no avid gardener should miss. Be sure to be there on Tuesday, June 19th!

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Club Officers and Committees

Board members

President: Paul Hoffman

Vice President: Don Strickland

Secretary: Jim Moore

Treasurer: Mac Williamson

Immediate Past President: Sherrill Johnson

At-large board members: Barbara Brown, Ginny Parker, Ed Ponek, Gail Posey

Committee members

Activities Chairs: Will Farmer (seed swap), Renee Engates (refreshments), Mark Boone (picnic), Ginny Parker (awards banquet)

Audit: Rose Cotton, Charles Gilliam, Kathy Moore

Azalea Sale: Charlie Leverett

Beautification Awards: Josephine Tayao

Club Awards: Jim Moore

Endowment Investment: Charles Gilliam

Friendship: Reed and Chris Elliott

Historical: Donna Farmer,

Membership: Barbara Brown

Newsletter Editors: Laine Thomas, Reed Elliott

Nominating: TBA

Programs: Don Strickland

Projects: Sharon LaRusch

Publicity: Charles Gilliam

Refreshments: Renee Engates

Scholarship: Joanne Boone

Telephone: Johnny Johnson

Webmaster: Reed Elliott

A Trip to Big Bloomers *(continued from page 1)*

After spending an hour wandering around (not nearly enough time to see everything), I'll go get a cart and come back to pick up some the new perennials that looked interesting to me. On the way out I'll check the annual greenhouses and load a flat with different varieties. The annuals have to meet one of two criteria – they either grew for me before or they look interesting and I haven't tried them yet.

Some of the plants I brought home last week to try for the first time are *Malva sylvestris* 'Zebrina', a hollyhock cousin with striped raspberry colored flowers that might bloom most of the summer, *Saponaria* (soapwort) that might be a good ground-cover drooping over rocks on the terrace, and *Celosia* 'Flamingo Purple', an annual that looked outstanding all summer at J.C.Raulston last year.



You can get to Big Bloomers by going down US 1 to the south part of Sanford, turning right at the light at Church Center Rd, and then turning left in less than a quarter mile onto Pressly Foushee Road. You'll find the nursery on your left a short way down. I can get there from northwest Raleigh in a little less than an hour. You can also visit their website at "www.bigbloomersflowerfarm.com".

Contact Us

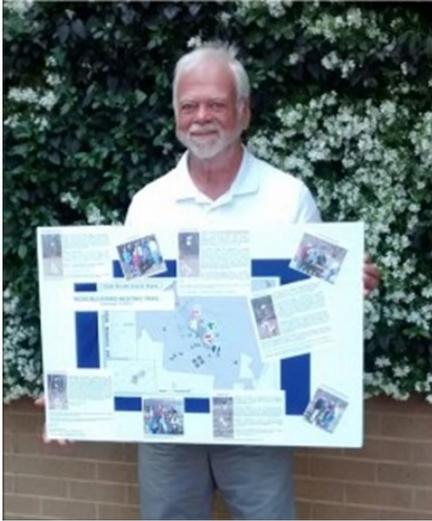
For additional information email our Club at gardener@gardenersofwakecounty.org

Contact Paul Hoffman, President, by phone at home: 919-781-0785 or by cell: 919-559-5495

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

June's Guest Speaker Talks Bluebirds

by Don Strickland, Vice President



How to bring bluebirds to your home and garden is the subject of GWC's June 19th guest speaker, North Carolina Bluebird Society President Ken Kernodle. He'll explain why bluebirds are good residents in our gardens and offer tips on enticing them to join us. "Gardeners and bluebirds go together like apple pie and ice cream," says Kernodle, "and these birds are habit forming ... prepare to get hooked."

Kernodle grew up on a family farm about 10 miles north of Greensboro in Guilford County where he began an infatuation with nature, including bluebirds, that continues to this day. As a small boy, he would venture into the woods looking for hollow logs and trees to repurpose as bluebird houses. Later, in high school shop class, he designed and built nesting boxes. After earning a Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Engineering from North Carolina State University, Ken spent 42 years working for Duke Energy—always maintaining a bluebird nest box at home.

When he retired in January, 2011, Ken devoted himself to supporting the comeback of and public education about bluebirds. He became active in the North Carolina Bluebird Society, telling and retelling the story of the eastern bluebird—how the species went from abundance to being threatened, and then, recently, has begun making an astonishing comeback. Once one of North Carolina's most common songbirds, bluebird numbers nosedived from the 1930s to the 1960s and by the late 1970's they were declared rare and uncommon. Major factors contributing to the decline included habitat loss, widespread pesticide use, and competition from other cavity-nesting and invasive species—especially starlings and house sparrows.

A big reason for the bluebird population resurgence in recent years is support from home gardeners. Backyard horticulturists love them because they are voracious insect eaters, capable of quickly ridding a garden of pests. Their bright blue and red plumage also makes them an attractive and enthralling sight among the flowers.

The scientific name for the eastern bluebird is *sialia salis*. It's a member of the thrush family, commonly found in eastern North America. Males are deep blue above with a brick red breast and white underbelly. Females are duller, almost gray, with blue in their wings and tail.

Kernodle will bring informational material from the North Carolina Bluebird Society along with examples of nest boxes and metal mounting poles that work well.



(NOTE: Bill Satterwhite was originally scheduled to be the June GWC Bluebird speaker but had to cancel because of advancing age)

Try, Trying Again at Longview

by Sharon LaRusch



KEEP
CALM
AND
RESCHEDULE
ON

Well, instead of April showers, we had an abundance of them in May! Our scheduled workday of May 19th would have made for wet well, everything, so that game was called on account of rain!

Not to be deterred from our Club goals for this Project, we hope to **double** the fun in June! Accordingly, our washed out May date has been rescheduled for this coming Saturday, June 2nd. This will be followed by our previously slated June workday which occurs on Saturday after the regularly scheduled Club meeting - that's June 23rd.

Both workdays have a similar schedule of events:

- 9:30-9:45 *Check-In & Workday Huddle*
- 9:45-12:15 *Workday Fun & Fellowship*
- 12:15-12:45 *Recap & Check-out*

Hope to see lots of Club members out there for both sessions! If you aren't on the email list, let Lynn or me know! You can contact us at:

Sharon: njoynthejourne@yahoo.com or phone: 919-215-2702; 919-656-1717

Lynn: thechocolategardener@yahoo.com



Small Urban Gardens in Raleigh

by Laine Thomas, Editor

I have a new morning ritual of walking for thirty minutes in my neighborhood. I need the exercise, but can never convince my groggy-morning self to do anything more ambitious than walk. Walking comes with the incentive that I get to look at everyone's garden. I recently noticed two beautiful, tiny gardens in my neighborhood. By tiny I mean 200 sq ft, not 0.25 acres.

The first used hardscaping with flagstone to replace grass, but in curved lines and layers so that it almost looks like water. This house has a weeping cherry, magnolia, and a jasmine arch opening up to the front porch.



The second house is owned by local artist Rick Bennett. He would make Brie Arthur proud with vegetables growing amidst the ornamentals in his front yard. His yard is mostly shady and the sunniest place is the devil's strip between the sidewalk and the street. He maximizes the use of that space by growing vegetables in pots, where the pots are piled densely and surrounded by perennials. Yes that is an artichoke you see growing in a pot next to the sidewalk. He also has collard greens, basil, oregano, bell peppers and tomatoes. I can't wait to go back and see what else I missed.

I wanted to share these diminutive jewels with everyone as a way of reminding ourselves that beauty is, indeed, capable of coming in small packages and that being a "gardener" doesn't require owning an estate!

My Corner of the Garden

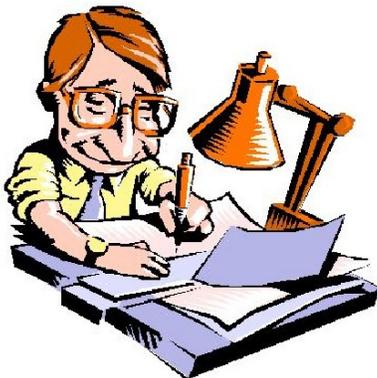
by Reed Elliott, Editor

During our first couple of years in North Carolina, my wife and I struggled heroically each summer to hand water our thirsty gardens. This is hot and uninviting work, at best. We tried using large area broadcast sprinklers but those spread lots of expensive water on bare earth and encouraged bumper crops of luxuriant weeds. At a Club meeting a couple of years ago, I heard Johnny Johnson extolling the virtues of drip irrigation in a 5-minute talk. Johnny encouraged me and gave me a lot of good advice. Last year I constructed drip irrigation systems for four areas at our home – three flower gardens and one, large vegetable patch – probably about 300 feet of line with a couple hundred emitters. The systems worked great! During the peak of summer last year, we found we could water all our gardens, and just the plants we wanted watered, simply and without having to stand outdoors for hours in the heat. Both our children were thrilled by our success and, for their birthdays this year, my wife and I constructed drip systems for their gardens. At this point, I've probably laid nearly 1000 feet of drip tubing and installed many hundreds of drip emitters. It's surprisingly easy to do, cheap and, once it's done, you can say goodbye to hand watering and massive water bills.

Let's talk specifics. There are only nine required components and all can be purchased online. Let's detail what's needed and what the costs are for a 200-foot system (can be subdivided into two, 100-foot systems or four, 50 foot-systems for essentially the same price):

1. 200 ft roll of 5/8 inch tubing, \$29
2. 100 ft roll of 1/4 inch vinyl feeder line, \$13 (don't buy the cheaper plastic stuff, it doesn't work)
3. 100, 1/4 inch straight, barbed connectors \$8
4. 5, figure 8 end clamps \$5
5. 100, u-shaped 6 inch metal anchor pins \$14
6. 2, 3/4 inch hose adaptor ends, \$6
7. 50, stake emitters \$9
8. 1, tubing punch \$2
9. 1, hose end shut off timer, \$10

Total price: \$90



To make a system all you have to do is lay out a mainline through your garden. Keep each line less than 50 feet long so you'll have enough water pressure at the emitters. Mark on the hose where you want to plug in emitters for each plant you want to water. Punch holes in the line, insert a barbed connector, cut 1/4 inch lines (about 2 feet each) and attach one to each connector, stick an emitter on each line, lay the whole thing back in the garden and tack it down, as needed. Put a figure 8 clamp at the end of the line and a hose adaptor at the top. Attach your hose, hose end timer, turn on the water, set the time and walk off. If you'd like help or want to know more, feel free to talk to me or to Johnny Johnson at any Club meeting or send me an email at reed.o.elliott@gmail.com.

New Members

The Gardeners of Wake County welcomes anyone and everyone who loves gardens and gardening. This month we're happy to welcome back some returning members: Marion Wray and Emily Holloway, both of Raleigh. Be sure to say, "Hi and welcome back" if you see them at this month's meeting.