

The Clod-Hopper



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Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. — Raleigh, NC

May 2019

Measure for Measure

by Christine Elliott, Friendship Chair



For the last three years Charlie Leverett has been the point man for our spring Azalea Sale. He begins looking into North Carolina grown azalea availability and

types as early as October. He works with up to six different wholesale nurseries to find the best range of plants at the best possible price. This year he had the added challenge of uncertainty about the site for the sale, eventually working out an arrangement with Phil Campbell for us to move with her to the beautiful new location a block or so down Campbell Road from her old retail venue. It was a stressful time but in the end everything worked out well. Even as we wrapped up this year's sale, Charlie was already making plans for how to make next year's sale even better! You go, Charlie.

Charlie is a self-described "military brat". His folks met at a square dance in Greensboro while his father was stationed at Fort Bragg. Looking for weekend activities and women, he and the troops headed for G'boro. The rest, as they say, is history. Look it up.

Growing up, Charlie lived in France for three years and Germany for four. His grandparents farmed 113 acres near the RDU airport. Charlie's family returned to the farm when his dad retired from the service. Charlie met his wife, Debbie, as he tells it, when she kept sitting next to him at a college and career Bible study until he took serious notice! Charlie graduated from Methodist University, and Debbie has a MRS. and Hugs Degree from Hugs University, where she graduated summa cum laude. When they moved back to the farm after college and started their own family, four generations of Leveretts became a family unit!

Club Meetings

May is a special month for the GWC because May's the time for our Club's Annual Picnic and Plant Exchange, a tradition that harkens back to the organization's beginnings. As always, Pam's Farmhouse will do the catering serving a delicious spread that typically includes things like beef chips and rice, BBQ and fried chicken, potato salad, butter beans, collard greens and much more. Club members contribute by bringing either an appetizer or dessert. *Hors d'oeuvres* begin at 6:00 p.m. with dinner starting around 6:45. The cost is a bargain at eight dollars per person. Mark and Joanne Boone have again offered to host the event at their beautiful home at 4401 Dewees Court. The evening wraps up with the justly famed plant exchange. Don't miss it!

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Club Officers and Committees

Board members

President: Virginia (Ginny) Parker
Vice President: Kalli Shevzov
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: Kalli Shevzov
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/>

Measure for Measure *(continued from page 1)*

Charlie's family grew tobacco, corn and hay. About 2000 square bales of hay were harvested yearly from the family's 35 acres of hay fields to feed their 40 head of Charolais crossed with Angus cattle raised on the farm. They maintained three different vegetable gardens, two apple orchards, and other fruit and nut trees. Produce not eaten fresh was canned or dried. Charlie has great memories of his mom's apple fritters made from dried apples kept in a huge pantry.

Their kids now raised and off on their own adventures, most of the farm land sold, Debbie, Charlie and Charlie's 93-year-old dad still live on the remaining acres. Charlie and Debbie now grow plants for beauty and scent. They love roses. Sun Glow, a tea rose, and Joseph's Coat, a climbing rose, are among their favorites. They also love Royal Standard, a fragrant hosta.



Thank you, Charlie and Debbie. From your cheerful greetings at meetings to your long commitment to our Azalea Sale, you enrich our Club beyond measure.

May is a wonderful time for a picnic ... and for a plant exchange. Let's have one!

by Kalli Shevzov, Vice President



A long-time member of GWC told me that the original reason for having a picnic in May was to thank those who volunteered to work at the Azalea Sale in April. Let's start this year's picnic off by giving a rousing and hearty GWC "Thank you" to all those who volunteered their time, expertise and effort to make this year's sale another memorable success.

We give thanks, too, to Mark and Joanne Boone who again are generously hosting this year's picnic. Their lovely garden and home are a beautiful place for a spring picnic! If you haven't been there before, the address is 4401 Dewees Court, Raleigh, NC 27612-3501. Put those GPS devices to work!

The annual GWC spring picnic (and plant exchange) will occur this year on Tuesday, May 21 at 6 pm. If you haven't already paid, the cost is \$8.00 per member or guest payable at the door. Here's the catch. If you haven't paid in advance you DO need to let Ginny Parker know in advance that you plan to attend. A final count is needed by May 19 in order to ensure serving everyone. If you haven't already done so, be sure to call Ginny Parker and let her know you want to attend. Ginny's contact number is 919-880-3233.

In addition, bring an appetizer or a dessert to share. Our main meal is catered by Pam's Farmhouse Restaurant, and the menu looks really tasty. Fried chicken, BBQ chicken, or beef tips with rice and gravy are the entrée options. Vegetable sides are collards, butter beans and corn, potato salad; dinner rolls and hushpuppies round out the meal. What's NOT covered by Pam's Farmhouse are appetizers and dessert – those items will only appear if Club members provide them! Appetizers will be shared starting at 6 pm and the meal will be served at 6:45.

The usual 50/50 drawing will be held. Tickets are \$1.00 apiece or 7 tickets for \$5.00. What a bargain! Previous year's prizes have included things like beautiful handmade bird baths and rainwater storage tanks. This year's mystery prize will be revealed at the picnic. Be sure to come with some cash!

The traditional plant exchange (and free-for-all melee) will be held after the meal. As always, please bring plants to exchange with fellow Club members - the more the merrier. And if you don't have any plants to bring, that's okay, too. Others always bring extras. That said, if you've got extras, please bring 'em. Mac Williamson, our starting line judge, says that the same rules apply as in past years: All participants have to be behind the starting line until the signal to "go" is given, only one plant per participant per trip, no holding, pushing or tripping. No special treatment for the ladies, this is an equal opportunity event.

Final reminder - contact Ginny by May 19th if you haven't done so already at (919) 880-3233 and come on out with a tasty appetizer (or dessert) and some plants to share.



April Showers, May Flowers at Longview

by Sharon LaRusch

Being a native of this area, I always smile when I hear a transplant say “One of the great things about North Carolina is that there are four distinct seasons.” Sometimes I jokingly say “Yes, sometimes all in one month!” After the chuckle that typically follows, more conversation ensues and a new friend is made. There have been seasons out at Longview as well! Seasons of discovery, reclaiming the path, and preparing for a new beginning. We are entering a short season of light work, almost a hiatus of sorts.



This past month’s workday was a short one but very important. We rescued a handful of remaining plants and then created a ‘virtual garden plan’. This enabled us to verify the layout and make some slight adjustments to the final version of the new garden plan for submission to WakeMed. In addition, for those who are visual people, the plan converts words on paper into something alive in the cleared expanse of the property.

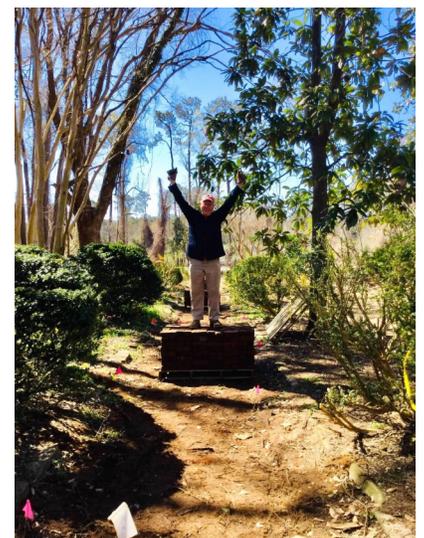


We have been a dedicated group for sure and have prepared The Garden Walk at Longview for some major work WakeMed is about to start to help us prepare for fall planting. Lynn joined me for a meeting with WakeMed just this afternoon. We were able to present the plans and Lynn gave eloquent explanations of version changes and thought processes behind our layout. Our meeting concluded with a visual presentation of that layout as she toured the group down the garden path we created Saturday. We stood at the end, in the center of the WakeMed logo and discussed next steps, timelines and action plans. I can share that WakeMed has

been impressed with our work and very thankful for our passion and dedication.

For summer season out at Longview, WakeMed will be grading and preparing the site for planting, setting up irrigation, and relaying the brick walkway. During that time, our workload will be light...a little weeding, laying some mulch in certain areas, etc. Our work will be based on WakeMed’s progress, so we will need to be flexible on our scheduled workdays for the next couple of months. If weather alters scheduling, workdays may cancel or change but will be lower key than the last few sessions. That will give us a rest before the busy time of fall when plotting, staking, prepping and planting will begin.

We’ll have the final version on display for you at the picnic and stay tuned to your email and the Clodhopper for updates! A tremendous thank you goes out to all of you that have labored, applauded and encouraged, and helped prepare for this moment!



Bearded Iris

by Paul Hoffman, Immediate Past President

Almost twenty years ago my daughter brought home a little flyer that had been handed out at the elementary school where she was teaching. The flyer offered bearded iris for sale at 25 cents a fan for the following two weeks in April. The address was Carpenter Pond Road about 5 miles north of where I live. Never one to pass up a bargain and just beginning to be a serious gardener myself, I made a little excursion the next weekend to see what was going on. What was waiting for me was a little ranch style home in the country surrounded by spring blooming perennials, with a mass of day-lilies emerging on the front bank and twenty or more varieties of blooming iris growing in rows in the field next to the house.

I knocked on the door of the house and the old gentleman and his wife inside were happy to see me. He pulled on his rubber boots, grabbed his shovel and a big bucket, and off we went into the field. Like the kid in the candy store, I said "I'll take two of those, and two of those, and of course I've got to have two of those..." At each clump he would cut off two rhizomes with attached fans with his shovel and toss them into the bucket. No labels, but the stalks with the colorful iris flowers were still attached. He told me if I got them in ground quickly, the lower blooms might still put on show that spring.



Alas, it took several years for my small investment to pay off. For some reason I carefully laid out my iris in a dry, very shady section of the garden and they didn't do much except survive for the next five years. I don't think they minded the dryness that much, but they really needed a good dose of sunshine to be happy. When for some reason, I moved some into a much sunnier area, I was very quickly rewarded with lots of blooms the next spring and plants that knew how to multiply.

These iris are now a mainstay in my April garden. Each new bed I dig gets one or two or even three plantings of iris and I'm always careful to be sure every bed gets at least some sunshine. I dig up crowded three or four-year-old plantings just after blooming is finished in the spring, cut the leaf fans down to about four inches, lay the rhizomes down in a circle about 18 inches across with the blades forming the outside of the circle, and sprinkle a thin layer of soil over the planting. When I do this in May, the blooms will be there the next April. Maintenance is minimal – I pull off dried blades and pull up the few weeds that attempt to compete – but I never have to water to be successful.

If you would like to try your own experiments, I'll bring a couple of buckets of iris to the picnic in May. You won't even have a pay a quarter a fan to take some home.



My Corner of the Garden

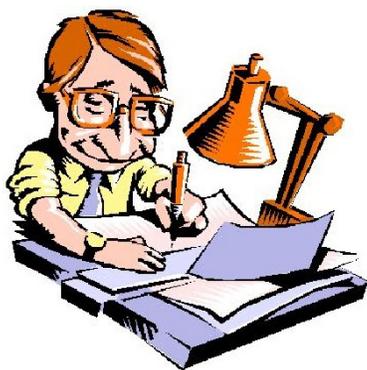
by Reed Elliott, Editor

Several years ago my wife and I had the good fortune to take a “mindfulness” class. Being “mindful” encourages us to make a conscious effort to see and appreciate even the smallest details of our lives – to savor the warmth of sunlight on skin, to attend to the sound of wind blowing through leaves, to appreciate the kindnesses of friends and strangers. Becoming more “mindful” has helped me become more grateful. And this month I’d like to express some gratitude.

Our Club’s annual Azalea Sale has just wrapped up. Despite facing some significant challenges it was, once again, a remarkable success. Our net profits were more than \$10,000 – and those profits are the single most important source of money for the annual scholarships we award to gifted NCSU horticulture students. They also fund honorariums for Club speakers, fees at JC Raulston for monthly meetings, and a large part of both the spring picnic and Christmas Banquet. The success of this year’s Sale is owed to a lot of people, not least the many Clubmembers who volunteered day after day, rain or shine, to be out at Campbell Road Nursery unloading, arranging, inventorying, and selling azaleas. There are several specific individuals whose efforts and generosity I’d like to explicitly acknowledge.

First is Charlie Leverett, our Azalea Sale Chair. Charlie was confronted this year with many uncertainties. Our long-time sale location at Campbell Road Nursery had closed and it appeared we might have to find a new venue. Campbell Road Nursery traditionally had allowed us to use their property for free but no one else was prepared to extend such terms. Campbell Road Nursery was centrally located. Other options were less convenient for our customers. And what about garden carts? What about water to keep azaleas alive and fresh? What about nighttime security? Charlie had to deal with and overcome all these problems. Months of effort and judicious care in selecting the varieties and types of azaleas we stocked as well as months of detailed planning and organization paid off.

Second are Mac and Vivian Williamson. When it comes to unselfish dedication, these folks take the prize. As in many years past, both Mac and Vivian were present every day of the Sale from start to finish. They were there every morning when the sun came up and the doors opened. They were there on the beautiful days and on days when the rain poured down and the wind howled through our tent. And they were there every evening when the sale closed and the equipment had to be put away and the tent taken down. They monitored our expenses and our sales meticulously and communicated our progress to the Board members on a day by day basis. Mac brought knowledge, expert advice, and reassurance to nervous buyers. Vivian brought much appreciated treats each day for the Club crew.



And finally there are Phil Campbell and the staff of Campbell Road Nursery. They went the extra mile and then some for us this year. Despite the fact that they’d moved to a much smaller location, they made room for us. They provided carts. They provided water. They provided nighttime security. And they did it all for free despite the obvious inconvenience to the Nursery’s own operations. The only reason our Club made a \$10,000+ profit this year was because of Phil Campbell and Campbell Road Nursery. If you’re in the market for plants or if you know someone who’s looking to buy plants, do them a favor and refer them to Campbell Road Nursery.

And so, I’m mindful of how fortunate I am to be a member of the Gardeners of Wake County. I say “thank you” with a grateful heart to Charlie, Mac, Vivian and Phil.

New Members

The Gardeners of Wake County welcomes anyone and everyone who loves gardens and gardening. This month we’re happy to have added Cathy Hoyle, Joanne Ekena, and Vivian and Stephen Colbert, all of Raleigh and Carol Friedman, of Knightdale. Be sure to say, “Hi and welcome!” if you see them at this month’s picnic.