

The Clod-Hopper



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Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. — Raleigh, NC

September 2018

Fun with Colorful Coleus

by Paul Hoffman, President



Being from Michigan, I thought my garden would look its best in mid-summer. Not so in North Carolina. The heat of July and August makes almost everything go dormant, even me. Almost by accident, I found the plant that gives me the most outstanding steady color in those hot months and on into September is coleus, an annual whose showiness comes from the

bright patterns in its foliage, not its dainty flowers.

These plants recommend themselves in several ways. The variety of colors and patterns is fascinating. They like the part shade/part sun that dominates my yard. They grow slowly in the spring but take off around the Fourth of July. They are OK with, even seem to like, the heat and even tolerate lack of water when planted in good soil that is well mulched. This is very important in my garden where they do not get pampered with supplemental irrigation.

Another aspect of coleus that is great fun for me is that it can be propagated very easily and quickly. I'll go to the Farmer's Market around the middle of April and buy one each of the most interesting coleus I find that is not marked as a patented plant. I'll immediately go home, cut off the main stem of each plant three nodes down, and pop it into its own pot. In four weeks, I'll have two plants that now go into the ground and from which I take more cuttings. Any math major who understands the power of two will know that by July I will have a lot of coleus plants.



Club Meetings

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

GWC September speaker Elizabeth Mann says, "I've always had a fascination with insects, especially butterflies, and a passion for conservation and recycling. The butterfly is the most fragile of all creatures and a big indicator of environmental health so what better way to help restore the environment than to study the butterfly?" Butterflies are more than just attractive distractions in our gardens. As they search for nectar, they help pollinate plants, ensuring seeds for future generations. Elizabeth's September 18th presentation will inform our members about butterfly-friendly gardening and butterfly life cycles. "I'll be offering planting tips that will keep butterflies coming and coming back." All GWC members want lusher and healthier gardens. Elizabeth Mann's presentation is a must. Be sure to be there.

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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

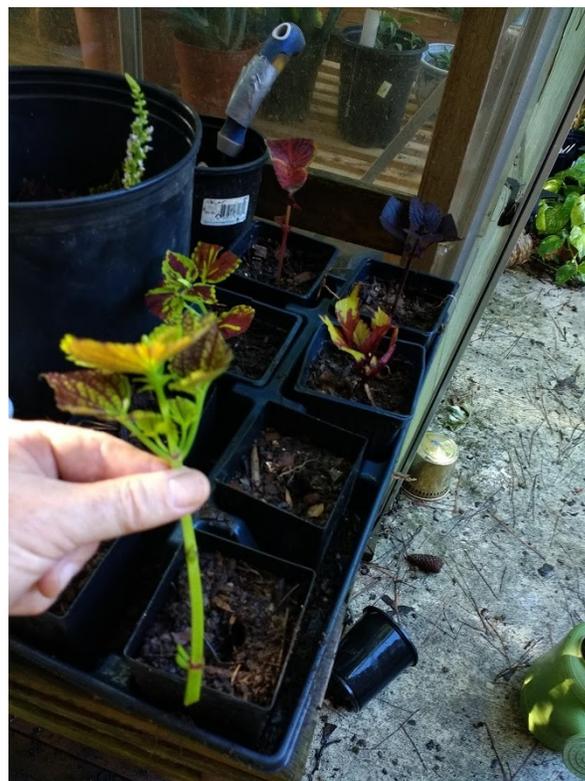
Telephone: Johnny Johnson

Webmaster: Reed Elliott

Fun with Colorful Coleus

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This is the recipe for coleus propagation that works for me. The pots contain a mixture of potting soil, pine bark soil amendment or fine mulch, and compost watered down. I cut the stem three nodes down, trim the leaves off the bottom two nodes and trim back any large leaves at the top by 2/3. Then I dip the bottom nodes for 5 seconds in Dip'N'Grow rooting hormone. I use a stick to make a hole in the potting mixture down to the bottom of the pot, place the stem in the hole, press the soil around it, and re-water. I leave the cuttings in the shade, watering every four or five days and in about four weeks I have a new plant ready to go in the ground.



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/>

Last winter I even experimented with bringing in a plant. I liked having it inside for the cold months. It survived, though a bit bedraggled, and provided three stems that successfully went through the propagation regimen the following spring. Try taking some cuttings yourself and see if you can't be ready to expand your coleus display next summer.

We'll Hear about Butterfly-friendly Gardening from GWC

September Guest Speaker, Elizabeth Mann

by Don Strickland, Vice President

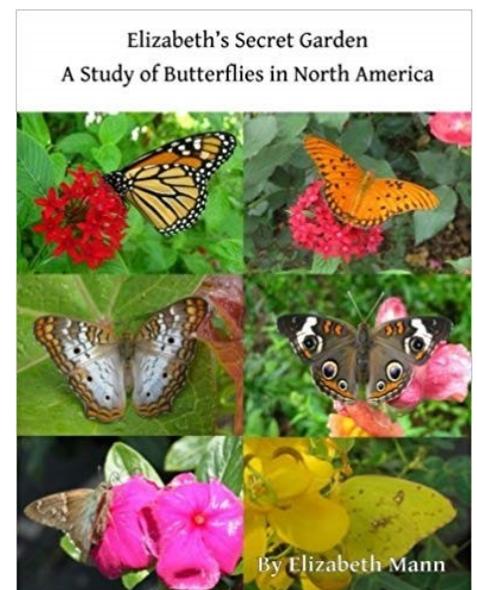


"I've gone many places and seen many sights," says Wake Forest preschool teacher Elizabeth Mann, "but one of my most remarkable impressions is knowing that God took care to make sure the most fragile of creatures, the Monarch butterfly, can journey up to 3,000 miles to winter in Mexico." When Mann talks about butterflies, it's with a reverence and appreciation that began in early childhood and only grows as she enters young womanhood. Born in Maryland, but brought up in North Carolina and Florida, Elizabeth began raising butterflies in the Sunshine State and wrote the first of four books there: "A Study of Butterflies in North America."

"I've always had a fascination with insects, especially butterflies," she says, "and a passion for conservation and recycling. When we moved to Orlando there was a landscaping company called Lukas Nursery that had a butterfly encounter feature. It was there that I learned I could raise butterflies in my own backyard by planting species-specific plants, also called host plants. The butterfly is the most fragile of all creatures and a big indicator of environmental health so what better way to help restore the environment than to study the butterfly?" Butterflies are more than just attractive distractions in our gardens. As they search for nectar they help pollinate plants, ensuring seeds for future generations. They're also part of the food chain, serving as prey for many birds and small mammals.

Elizabeth's September 18th GWC presentation will be on butterfly-friendly gardening and a study of butterfly life cycles. "I'll be covering how to attract adult butterflies to feed and lay eggs so you can start the rearing process," she promises. "I'll offer some different requirements and tips as you plant flowers...what will keep those butterflies coming back, how to create a butterfly-hospitable garden, and how to use readily available items and containers to create a habitat for rearing. We'll also go into butterfly conservation focusing on protecting them for future generations."

As young as she is, Elizabeth Mann has already led a full and ambitious life. She created a travel and gardening blog called "Elizabeth's Secret Garden" which has attracted more than 120,000 visitors. She's certified in family herbal medicine and permaculture. She manages a 20' x 60' vegetable garden, a butterfly garden, kitchen garden, and butterfly conservatory. "I'm a full-time preschool teacher," she says, "with a love of adventure, meeting new people, and going places. I've been into photography and writing since age eight when I decided I was going to be an author one day. Little did I know I'd go on to self-publish four books and write for magazines." A seasoned traveler, Elizabeth went to Costa Rica about eight years ago and spent five days trekking through the jungle to find one of the rarest Blue Morpho butterflies: *Morpho amathonte*. To get close-up photos, she forded rivers full of slippery rocks and strong currents until she accomplished her goal.



Longview—A Means to a Beginning

by Sharon LaRausch



I think that the weather for this past workday at Longview had to be the best yet! We welcomed a teaser of fall and the temperatures were perfect with a cloudless sky greeting us to the garden. Fourteen volunteers continued to work on the goals of clearing. Paul, Mark and Jim established that we are only a few yards away from what could serve as the end of our brick path.

I don't know about you, but some tasks are just more enjoyable when you have friends to share them with – and that especially so for sweaty tasks! August's workday was that kind of day. I felt like we were closing in on the goals of the day, with half of my fitbit steps in without realizing it, and I had enjoyed watching new folks meet our awesome Club members and a brand new member of only two weeks get to know other members and sense they are a part of something really cool!

At the end of the two hours, smiling faces exited as my hubby used a blower on the path to give it a fresh dusting! I thought about our plans for the rest of the day. We intended to spend a couple of hours in our own yard. It was then that I felt SO thankful that even though the conditions were perfect to work in the yard this morning, these awesome volunteers had taken time to dedicate precious hours to the Garden Walk at Longview. They very well



could have spent that time in their own yards.



Since Lynn and I have started dreaming a little about the landscape planning, I looked down the path and imagined the ultimate fruits of our Club's labor. Maybe it will be a critical care nurse getting a quick bite to eat on a bench in the shade. Perhaps a family gathering just to get some time away from a patient room and becoming energized by watching the bluebirds feeding their babies. Maybe the path will allow for the reflection of a patron of the foundation resulting in dedicating a beautiful sculpture for the end of the Walk. From that perspective, our workdays are more than removing debris and lopping wisteria. It is not a means to an end; it's a means to a beginning.

For those who couldn't make it, we missed you out at Longview and hope to see you at our next workday, September 22nd. Lynn and I will be meeting with WakeMed staff in early September to discuss the next planning stages. In addition, we hope to provide opportunities for folks to volunteer at Longview without having to physically come to Longview! How's that for a teaser? 🤔

Flowers and Memories

by Christine Elliott, Zinnia Whisperer

Our delightful August speaker, Mark Weathington, said he loved plants and gardens, but he didn't love gardening. Well, I love it all. My parents weren't gardeners. I came to gardening through my mother-in-law, Doris Elliott. She gardened for 35 years in Northern New Mexico and 30 more years in Tucson, Arizona. There was nothing she enjoyed more than putting around in her yard. In arid Arizona, she nurtured plants to grow throughout cold winters and the long hot summers; celebrating their rare blossoms.

One of our favorite things to do on visits was go out to Bach's Nursery and shop for new specimens. 20 years ago we bought a tiny agave and planted it together in their back yard. It is now huge. Seeing it, recalling the planting of it, reminded me that gardening for us was more than just the plants and the garden. Gardening became a bond we shared and a family tradition to pass on. My memories of Doris are tied up in her garden in a spiritual way. Like the song "Nearer, My God, to Thee", I feel close to her and to God when working in the garden.



Reed and I just got back from visiting Reed Sr. in AZ. We hit the sweet spot of the August Monsoon season, perhaps two inches of rain earlier in the month. Plants that all year long are monochromatic, for a few short weeks explode with yellow, orange, red, pink and blue blooms. I don't know all their names, but plumbago, bougainvillea, Mexican bird of paradise, lantana, and oleander grew in Doris' yard. She would have loved this year's display.

One last funny note about gardening in Tucson. While walking through the yard I noticed cactuses growing in the stones! They pricked my fingers through the gloves when I tried to pull them out. Who'd a thunk, cactuses are weeds in Arizona?! Now I know why Doris kept kitchen tongs in her gardening bag!



My Corner of the Garden

by Reed Elliott, Editor

Well, with fall just around the corner, my wife Chris and I have already begun to clean out the over-the-hill flowers and vegetables and plant some crops that hopefully will provide us with some fresh produce through the coming cold seasons. In the vegetable department we've bid a fond farewell to our always stellar cucumbers (now turned into rows of quick pickles in the fridge), our beloved Anaheim and habanero chilies, and our thriving basil. I've been sorry to see my massively productive okra go west, but Chris probably wouldn't agree. A bittersweet moment for both of us comes every year when our jungle of giant zinnias bites the dust. I'm beginning to think that Chris is the zinnia whisperer. Every year her zinnia bed provides a mass of beauty in our front yard and a haven and attractant for all kinds of bees, and, especially, for our cherished gold finches. There seem to be lots of gold finches around, but, interestingly, the North Carolina variety shows no interest whatsoever in the thistle seed that they considered an irresistible delicacy in our old home in California. No matter. Chris gets them in swarms with her zinnias, giant sunflowers, and black-eyed-susans. Sadly, those and the gold finches now are gone where all good summers go—at least until next year.

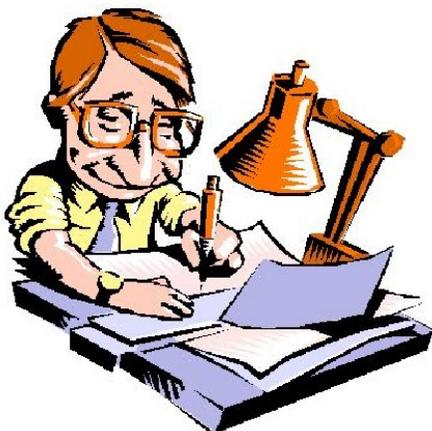


So now it's time to develop our fall and winter garden. The lettuces, kales, and chards, are, of course, the classics, but neither Chris nor I are big fans. We've had some success in the past with Chinese cabbage (napa)



and also with bok choy. Both of these lettuce family vegetables have the great virtue of being what is sometimes called "cut and come again." Napa, in particular, can have its head cut off about an inch or so from ground level after which it simply regrows. Presto! A whole new cabbage appears from the roots. Bok choy can be harvested from the outside inward—trimming the outer leaves for kitchen use stimulates the inner leaves to develop.

Both plants are durable, delicious, are said to be more nutritious and resistant to bugs than are others in their family. If we can't think of anything else to put in the ground, I've been pleased to find that if you break up garlic bulbs from the store into individual cloves and plant them in October, you'll have heads of garlic come spring. Italian parsley and cilantro both thrive in fall and sometimes even survive the frigid depths of winter.



I'd love to hear from other GWC members about what you've had the most success with in your fall and winter gardens. If I get enough responses/suggestions I'll include them in next month's Clod-Hopper. Feel free to email your thoughts to me at reed.o.elliott@gmail.com