



Quail's Tales

www.HillandDalegc.org

Hill and Dale is a member of Michigan Garden Clubs and National Garden Clubs

April 2012

President's preface

We just returned from a week in Las Vegas for Jan's ACSM conference. One of the things we enjoyed was the Bellagio Conservancy. Indoor ponds, fountains, waterfalls, and live harp music. One of the more interesting and unique things was a painting reproduced with flowers.

Pictures really don't give the full impact (but take a look anyway).



It will be a busy week trying to catch up on the garden since spring seems to be rather early this year. The crocuses have croaked and the daffodils are starting to fade. The tulips should start blooming any day now.

As the plants transition to a new season, so will the club. Club elections are just over a month away—if we can find members for the club offices and committees.

If we can't, then we should seriously consider how the club can continue. Dave

April meeting

As Dave noted, the business meeting will begin discussion on the future of the club. Bring your ideas.

Program: Herbs can be tasty, but they can be so much more—soothing or rejuvenating for two alternatives. Colleen French, of French Garden Creations, will introduce us to the best herbs to address what ails us—or what likely will make us even healthier. For \$2 those attending can create their own signature lotion.

Hospitality will be provided by Marcia Stewart and Joanne Bryngelson.

Nominations for 2012-2013 year

The following slate of officers is proposed: President, Kathleen Postema; Secretary, Joanne Bryngelson; Treasurer, Angela Paul. We're still looking for a candidate for vice president-program chair.

Elections are in May and new officers will be installed in June. The lack of a candidate for vice president raises the next question....

How will you serve the club this coming year?

Nominations for club officers will be announced at the April meeting, with elections to follow in May. If you're interested in running for office please contact a member of the nominating committee. No one has been nominated for vice-president-program chair.

In addition to the nominating committee, the club has 17 standing committees: Awards, Garden Therapy, Heritage Park Gardens, Horticulture, Hospitality, Junior Gardeners, Membership, Newsletter, Perennial Plant Gala, Publicity, Remembrance, Telephone Tree, Trowel and Error, Ways and Means and Website.

You may have noticed that some of the committees have not been very robust of late. If you'd like to rejuvenate them, consider chairing one of them. The new president will be looking for volunteers. If you see no use for them, let's consider dissolving some of them and concentrating our efforts on those things we do best.

Plant Gala—May 11-12

Keep an eye on what's blooming in the garden and start potting up the extras. Plants can be dropped off from noon to 5 on May 11. Plant IDs are essential, as is information on best growing conditions for the plant.

Sign up sheet for working the gala will be available at the April meeting. Times are May 11, noon to 3, 3 till done; May 12, 8 to noon, noon till cleaned up. This is the ONLY fundraiser the club holds. Proceeds pay for Garden Therapy, Junior Gardeners, program speakers and the newsletter.

Questions? See Mar Sclawy.

This 'n'that

- We send our sympathy to Sally Ouellette on the death of her sister.
- We welcome new club member Mary Benjamin.
- Amy Adams will receive her membership pin at the April meeting.
- Thanks to Nancy Adams for agreeing to audit the club's books at the end of the fiscal year in June.
- The club sent \$50 to the Loda Lake fund, honorarium for Sally Ouellette's presentation to the club
- The three Farmington area garden clubs are meeting to firm up plans for a Blue Star Memorial in Farmington. David Henry will have more information at the April meeting.

Dues are due. Pay Angela \$25.

Garden therapy

Amy Langdon can still use a few items for the May bagging. Check out your closets for the following items: small pinecones, moss, statice, small dried flowers. Chair for the May bagging is Gretchen Pugsley, ably assisted by Joanne Bryngelson and Lu Eaton.

Junior gardeners

April 21 project is "Watch It Grow." As always, interested kids should sign up at the downtown library. Adventure gets underway at 10 am.

Festival of the Arts

The Farmington Area Arts Council and the City of Farmington Hills Cultural Arts Division are once again showcasing the cultural organizations in the community at a three-day festival, April 19-21 at the Costick Center. Theme is Vote for the Arts. The festival will run from 10 am to 9 pm on Thursday and Friday and from 10 till 4 on Saturday.

Friday's highlight will close the day with *Art After Dark*, a wine tasting event which will also feature foods from Bella Vino, art for sale, and live jazz.

The festival will close at 4 pm on Saturday after a day titled Family Festival, featuring hundreds of pieces of adult and student art, hands-on projects, live entertainment and artist demonstrations.

The festival is free but donations are encouraged to perpetuate the festival and the programs featured during the event.

Coming up

- **April 17:** District 1 spring meeting. Registration is closed. Check with other members at the April meeting for possible car pooling to the San Marino Club.
- **April 25:** Janet Macunovich leads a FREE seminar on creating an allergy-friendly garden. She'll help you with gardening suggestions and strategies to minimize your allergic reactions. Location: Botsford Hospital's Community Room in the A&E Center, 28050 Grand River Avenue, Farmington Hills. Time: 6 to 8 pm. Reservations required. To register, call 1.877.477.3621.

Horticulture—*Forsythia, harbinger of spring*

Nothing is more beautiful than the blooming plants of spring. But, the epitome of spring is the beautiful yellow forsythia. I think they are extra beautiful this year.

What is the story behind forsythia?

Forsythia is native to China. It was discovered by Robert Fortune, a plant hunter. He named it for William Forsyth (1734-1804), a Scottish botanist. Forsyth was also a royal head gardener, and a founding member of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Forsythia is in the Oleaceae, or olive family. They are deciduous shrubs, flowering in the early spring before its leaves come out. They flower best in full sun, but can tolerate partial shade. Well-drained soil is a must. Forsythias flower on last year's growth, so prune immediately after flowering, if needed. It is not necessary to prune forsythia if you don't want to. They are beautiful left in their natural form.

There are many cultivars of forsythia. Probably the most popular forsythia cultivar is 'Lynwood Gold'. It is a very old cultivar, and grows 6-7 feet tall and wide. 'Gold Tide' is a short spreading form, great for a hillside or the front of the border. It grows only 20" high and spreads up to 4'. 'Arnold's Dwarf' grows only 3' tall. 'Fiesta' is a variegated form, with yellow and green foliage. It grows 2-3' tall. Forsythia suspensa is a weeping forsythia, growing 6-10' tall with a very weeping habit at the top. A new cultivar from Proven Winners is called 'Show-Off'. It is compact, growing 3-6' tall. The unusual thing about the new cultivar is that it blooms from the ground all the way up to the tips of the branches. As mentioned before, forsythia doesn't bloom on new growth, but this one does. These are just a few of the many varieties of forsythia. No matter which one you pick, you can't go wrong. The dark gold ones remind my daughter of the color van Gogh used in his paintings, such as Sunflowers. I personally like the clear yellow color

better. Whichever one you choose it will be beautiful . Don't be left out next spring; buy a forsythia today!
—Lisa Steinkopf

Forsythia ↓



Bufflehead

Critter spotting—Sap's rising

Back in the day, when I was teaching middle schoolers and high schoolers, the assistant principal reminded the teachers as he patrolled the halls in the spring: Sap's rising. The school halls were bereft of trees, but they were teeming with adolescent sap—the overwhelming urge to punch a buddy on the arm, grab a member of the opposite sex, escape from those halls, and celebrate the return of the sun and blue sky after a winter of grey.

Even though they haven't been cooped up for the winter (or cooped up anywhere, for that matter), the water fowl around us are exuberantly celebrating spring and the call of the opposite sex. Always seeming confused by the concept of two by two, the drake mallards are coalescing around a single female, who generally is far more put out than flattered by all the gawky attention. Meanwhile, the drakes are stretching out their necks in the duck-display of aggression, failing to notice that all the other drakes are doing the same thing. The female swims off, and the fellas are left with long necks and no girl. However, somewhere in the reeds lurks a drake with a better plan. Works every year. There are always ducklings on the marsh.

This year the usual mallard clan has been joined by a black duck. Slightly larger than mallards, this critter has a quack that far outstrips those of its smaller cousins. Bird book says they interbreed. We can hardly wait to hear what hatches out this spring.

While the migrating ducks have mostly come and gone, two pair of buffleheads are hanging around. Smaller than mallards, they get along well with the bigger birds and dive out of sight if they spot a tasty morsel or an approaching critter that looks unwelcoming. We hope they stay, maybe join the wood ducks who've made an initial appearance this season.

A single pair of Canada geese continues to nest across the canal from us. The male dutifully escorts his mate onto the nest, which doesn't show any obvious signs of renovation from year to year. The consistency of their habit is a godsend to the DNR egg addlers who know just where to pinch this couple's eggs year after year. Nonetheless, the male stands guard across from the nest, always on the lookout for danger. He used to stand on our dock—till we took it out. Then he stood on the seawall—till the dogs noticed him. Now he stands on neighbor Dan's lawn, doing what geese do best, and still keeping an eye on his long-standing bride across the way.

We can't believe that Bruno the enforcer swan still swims above the fishes. He was here when we moved in 13 years ago. But a swan that looks—and acts— just like him continues to patrol the canal, feathers fluffed, protecting the female who's brooding around the bend.

Sap's rising.

--Mar Sclawy © 2012