ISSUE
12
November
2026

The Coastal Bloom

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter for Members 4-page issue

Upcoming Events

11/16 5:30-8pm

CG Meeting at MBTS clubhouse

11/21
Sip & Shop fundraiser on Rt 26

12/14 6-8PM
OCC Assembly Set Up at MBTS clubhouse

12/15 9am-1pm
OCC Gift Bag Assembly at MBTS clubhouse

Newsletter Committee

Tina Siatkowski

Linda Barbour

Ruth Boggs

Gardens teach us how to start over, prune what no longer serves and to trust in seasons.

-Lena Hartwell

The Importance of Native Plants – a Presentation by Paula Engle



Photo courtesy of Paula Engle

On September 14, Paula Engle from **Heritage Native Plant Nursery** in Georgetown, DE, gave an informative presentation about the benefits of planting native plants.

Paula encouraged the use of ecological gardening that works with the natural systems of the environment. The more we can work with, and not against, nature, the better our gardens will enhance and preserve the integrity of our plant ecosystems.

Paula encouraged us to:

- **Use native plants to support native pollinators, birds and insects.** The more we can provide host plants for insects that birds eat, the more we support the bird population. We've lost 3 billion birds since 1970 and the insect population has dropped a staggering 75%. The more diverse your native plants, the more diverse of an insect population you'll attract.
- **Avoid chemicals at all costs.** Pesticides kill good microbes, hurts beneficial insects and poisons animals…and may be why the insect population has declined so sharply. The less insects for birds to eat, the less birds we have.
- **Nurture soil – don't rake your leaves from your garden.** Covered soil is healthy soil. She spoke about sheet mulching – lay layers of cardboard with mulch over top. Free Wood Chip Mulch from **ChipDrop** is a way to acquire wood chip mulch for free.
- **Plant milkweed for monarchs.** Another benefit of planting milkweed is that it's toxic to the spotted lanterfly.
- **Don't trim or clean out gardens until Spring.** Many larvae, bees and insects overwinter in stems and under leaves. Firefly larvae eat slugs! Find a spot in your garden to leave "messy."

Heritage: A Native Plant Nursery is located at 25141 Lewes Georgetown Highway (Rt 9), Georgetown, DE 19947

In the Garden

What is Seed Stratification?

Plants often have ways to protect young seedlings from harsh environments. Many perennials produce seeds in late summer or fall; if they germinated immediately, their seedlings would likely not survive winter. So, before they germinate, the seeds of many hardy plants must first experience a period of cold temperatures, known as seed stratification (or cold stratification). In nature, winter temperatures satisfy this dormancy requirement; seeds germinate the following spring when the weather is more favorable. If you purchase or collect seeds that require cold stratification to break their dormancy, you must supply that cold period yourself.

Most annual garden flowers and vegetables don't need stratification. However, many trees, shrubs, perennials and wildflowers do. Several weeks of exposure to cold and moisture are needed to break down the hard coats covering the seeds, allowing them to sprout. When you sow these seeds outdoors in the fall, winter naturally provides the necessary conditions. But if you're planning to plant in the spring, make sure to stratify the seeds beforehand. Some varieties require several months of cold, moist treatment to grow, so plan accordingly.

When you buy seeds from a reliable source, check the seed packet for any stratification requirements. If you collect your seeds, research how long each type needs to chill—this could be anywhere from a few weeks to several months. Thankfully, stratifying seeds is a simple and flexible process.

To learn more about how to stratify seeds, visit What Is Seed Stratification? Plus, How to Stratify Seeds for Planting.



Getting to Know …

Renee Simons



Renee grew up never living in one place for very long; her father's job took her to CT, NJ, CA, LA and MD. Her fondest memories are of time in California where, at age 4, she was fortunate to have had swimming lessons from an Olympian. She eventually became a swim instructor for over 600 individuals ages 3-75!

Renee obtained her degrees from the University of Maryland – a BS in education and a master's in health and counseling. She loved her position as a teacher of special education and took a personal interest in getting to know the families of her students.

After retiring in 2019, she wasted no time in setting off for Australia and New Zealand, a trip which was to become the first of many adventures home and abroad. Her love of the ocean brought her to Millville by the Sea two years later.

When not on the road, Renee attributes her love of gardening to many visits to her grandmother's home with its extensive gardens. We can only guess what adventures await her, but she hopes to focus on destinations featuring more beautiful gardens.

Photo courtesy of Renee Simons

New Garden Underway at Holt's Landing!

Coastal Gardeners and other volunteers met at Holt's Landing State Park to break ground for a new garden surrounding the flagpole at the park entrance in cooperation with DENREC. More to come on this exciting new project!



Photo courtesy of Tina Siatkowski

Flagpole garden underway!

Aroma Therapy Workshop

On October 19th, special guest Dr. Michael Schaber presented a fun and informative workshop on blending essential oils to create therapy scents. As scent is subjective to each person, what might be calming to one person might be exhilarating to another. One scent might be horrific to one, while it might be heavenly to another. Also, scents can bring back faded memories with one sniff!

Dr. Schaber brought a wide variety of over 20 essential oils to blend and experiment with. He explained the difference between top, mid and base scents. Top scents are the "first impression" being sharp, light and pungent, and are quickest to evaporate (peppermint, eucalyptus, bergamot), Mid scents are warm, herbal or floral and provide balance and the main "personality" of the blend and also often carry the therapeutic focus (lavender, geranium, chamomile), Base scents are slowest to evaporate and are deep and woody and anchor the scent (cedarwood, patchouli, sandalwood). Not every blend has to have these three elements. It's up to you to decide what your perfect scent is and the blend that will achieve it.

Some suggested essential oil blends for 10-drop recipes:

FOCUS: 5 drops Blood Orange/5 drops Peppermint

EXHILARATE: 4 drops Lemon/3 drops Frankincense/3 drops Lavender

SLEEP: 5 drops Lavender/5 drops Cedarwood

MEDITATE: 6 drops Peppermint/2 drops Black Pepper/2 drops Clove Bud

NATURE WALK: 4 drops Cedarwood/3 drops Patchouli/3 drops Lavender

CHILL: 4 drops Eucalyptus/2 drops Lemongrass/3 drops Lavender/1 drop Tea Tree



Coastal Gardeners and MBTS guests enjoyed the workshop.



At the "scent bar" deciding on scents. It wasn't easy!

For more information or to purchase premade aroma therapy blends, soaps and other natural items, follow Dr. Schaber's Skin Essentials, L.L.C on Facebook @DrSchaberSkinEssentials and online at www.drschaber.com.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Michael Schaber

The Source Spot!

Each newsletter issue will feature a member's favorite gardening product source.

Ruth Boggs will kick us off:

My favorite seed source is **Sow True Seed** (STS) of Asheville, NC. Founded in 2009, their motto is, "Sow. Germinate. Grow. Pollinate. Save."

STS provides a wide variety of seeds, bulbs, mushroom supplies and gardening accessories. Every year, our family enjoys the 5.5-6' tall "Monster Ashville Zinnias" (our nickname for them) that we buy from STS. We also plant many of their other showy and hardy annuals, as well as their high-producing vegetables. My prolific gardener Asheville cousin recommended STS to me years ago and I've never looked back. I visited STS' headquarters and the employees got a good chuckle over how excited I was to see their quaint shop in person.

STS' mission statement is as follows: "We are a small, dedicated employee-owned cooperative committed to making gardening approachable for everyone. We provide high quality, open-pollinated seed in support of sustainable food production and regenerative agriculture. We strive to help our customers cultivate a sense of empowerment and connection in an era of disengagement from nature, food and community. We're proud to call Asheville, North Carolina home."

Obviously, STS' gardening philosophy is right up Coastal Gardeners' alley. Their website, **sowtrueseed.com**, is chock-a-block of information. Happy planting!



Inside the **Sow True Seed** store in Asheville.



Left: A variety of Sow True seeds.

Below: Ruth's showy zinnias.



Photos courtesy of Ruth Boggs