



# The Coastal Bloom

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter for Members

## Upcoming Events

1/19 5:00pm

Get-together and  
mini meeting at  
Janet Green's

2/16 5:30-8:00pm

Monthly meeting  
at MBTS clubhouse

Happy New Year!

## Newsletter Committee

Pat Rainer

Linda Barbour

Tina Siatkowski

*The glory of gardening:  
hands in the dirt, head in  
the sun, heart with  
nature. -Alfred Austin*

## Operation Christmas Cheer

On December 16, Coastal Gardener elves gathered at the MBTS clubhouse to once again fill 120 gift bags for seniors in need.

At the wrapping stations, gifts were wrapped with love in red and green tissue and packed into festive stockings and gift bags.

Several carloads of bags were transported to the Roxana CHEER center where Meals on Wheels volunteers gathered them to deliver with the recipients lunch deliveries.

Thanks to all who participated throughout the year to make this project successful—and very special—for our local seniors. *See more OCC photos on page 4!*



Photos by Tina Siatkowski

## Dine & Donate Event

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Coastal Gardeners held a Dine & Donate fundraising event at **The Station** in Fenwick. We sold raffle tickets for two items: a Christmas tree complete with lights and ornaments, and a box full of cheer. The box of cheer was quite popular! In the end, \$220 was donated by the restaurant and we collected \$270 for the raffle. Thanks to Darlene Boerlage, Ruth Boggs, Sue Jordan and Michele Crane for all of their hard work and everyone who came out and participated.



Photo by Ruth Boggs

## In the Garden



These Christmas wreaths adorned the front doors of some of our members! Can you guess to whom they belong?



From top left to right and down:

A-Michele Crane  
B-Tina Siatkowski  
C-Chris Coppa  
D-Ruth Boggs  
E-Linda Barbour

Photos courtesy of members

## Getting to Know ...

### Christine Coppa



Photo courtesy of Christine Coppa

Although home was Rockville, MD, Chris spent most of her childhood in Taiwan, where her father served the Navy as its first board-certified medical physicist.

Chris met her husband John in high school when the family returned to Rockville for her junior year. John's position as senior director for Longhorn Steakhouse involved numerous moves, often to and from Atlanta. After living in New Hampshire, they realized they wanted to retire to a warmer climate and in 2020, moved to Bethany Beach where Chris's family had vacationed.

Chris has a degree from the University of Maryland in criminology, but her interests and talents lie in creative endeavors—she was always drawn to crafting, often entering juried shows. Chris has always loved gardening. Her landscaping features a variety of azaleas, which she lists along with peonies as her favorites. Her beautiful home and gardens are testament to an amazing talent.

### Q&A Corner

#### What sand and salt-tolerant pollinator shrubs are recommended?

**Clethra** is an excellent choice. This is an easy to grow native deciduous shrub that is salt-spray tolerant making it excellent for coastal gardens. They are pollinator magnets with either pink (Ruby Spice variety) or white (Hummingbird variety) flowers. Birds feed on the seed capsules. They grow 3-6' tall. Beautiful yellow leaves in the fall.

**Vaccinium (Blueberry)** is another great choice. They prefer dry, acidic, sandy soil. Their flowers support pollinators and birds love the berries. A lovely fall plant with brilliant reddish-purple leaves.

## The Art of Bonsai with Chris Rainer

At our November meeting, members and guests enjoyed an educational presentation on the art of bonsai by **Chris Rainer**, Certified Professional Horticulturalist and devoted bonsai enthusiast. Although Chris humbly refers to himself as an “amateur,” his knowledge and passion were evident as he guided us through the fascinating world of miniature trees.

Chris explained that *bonsai* literally means “planted in a pot,” with roots tracing back to ancient China before becoming an iconic art form in Japan. Central to bonsai is the Japanese aesthetic of **wabi-sabi**—finding beauty in imperfection and appreciating the passage of time. As Chris noted, bonsai teaches gardeners to cultivate *patience, close observation and harmony with nature*.

Despite their serene appearance, bonsai require thoughtful attention. Chris described the rewarding challenge of helping a plant thrive in a shallow container while shaping it to look as though it has weathered decades or even centuries outdoors. Key design principles include **balance, asymmetry, proportion, simplicity** and creating an **illusion of age**—all of which contribute to the tree’s character and charm.

For those eager to try bonsai at home, Chris offered practical guidance. Beginner-friendly plants include **juniper, Ficus, boxwood and jade**. A proper bonsai pot is shallow with generous drainage holes, and the soil should be coarse and fast draining to support frequent watering. Basic tools—such as bonsai wire, concave cutters, sharp shears, and even a simple turntable—help gardeners refine the tree’s shape. Chris also shared a useful tip: **chopsticks** are surprisingly handy for stabilizing new plantings and improving soil aeration.

Chris encourages newcomers to embrace the learning process. Every pruning session he reminded us, is an opportunity to understand our plants more deeply. As he put it so simply and beautifully: “**We learn from every cut.**”



### DE Federation of Garden Clubs Scholarship

Every meeting, a plastic jug is passed around into which money is deposited for DFGC scholarships. Read more about the scholarship, eligibility and process below.

#### Overview:

The DFCG offers one-year scholarships, up to a \$4,000 amount, to undergraduate junior and seniors, and graduate students. The winner of Delaware’s scholarship will be submitted to National Garden Clubs, Inc. and Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc. to be considered for an additional scholarship.

#### Eligibility:

Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent legal resident of the United States and must be attending school full-time.

Must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.25 on a 4.0 scale.

Must be planning a career related to gardening, landscape design, environmental issues, horticulture or a related field.

#### Process:

Applicants must provide official an academic transcript of the most recent grading period, a letter describing their background, future goals, financial need and career goals.

A list of their extracurricular activities, honors, recognition and awards received in the last three years.

Three letters of recommendation describing their scholastic ability, personal character and work-related experience.

The 2024 winner was Wilmington resident Michaela Somers, a junior at Wesleyan University majoring in Earth and Environmental Science.



Photo by Pat Rainer

# Operation Christmas Cheer 2025!



Thanks to all of the hardworking elves who made this day happen! Your commitment to our local seniors is special and recognized!