

The Seedling – May 2020

Volume 45, Issue 5

The Men's Garden Club of Burlington NC

<https://burlingtonmensgarden.club>



Next Meeting: May 26, 2020 Bring a guest!
 Located at your house via Zoom
 Updates from the Executive Committee
 And "Show and Tell" from the members

A Message from President Dirk Sprenger

Dear Members and Friends of the Men's Garden Club,

Some things never change. The weather, yes! The value of a dollar; the response of various institutions and people to Covid-19; many things do. But your dedicated officers of the Garden Club are stepping up and planning online meetings for May and beyond using Zoom video conferencing, which includes dial-in for voice only connection. The officers of the Garden Club are 100% committed. They follow the wise advice that **what is worth doing, is worth doing well**. They've made it look effortless to raise money without the labors of selling tomatoes and garden gloves or raffle tickets! I am sending a donation check today so be

sure we get through this season of stress and cancellations. I miss our times together at Occasions, but I pray our friends there will survive the shutdown and serve us again. The plants we bought from the 4-H plant sale are helping to support 300 members.

How is your garden? What came up early? Have you seen early insects too? Bird watching is helping us to keep calm and carry on. The May meeting will provide ample time to discuss such things and a way to see on your screen some photos from members about gardens/yards presented by **Kurt Moore, Ray Schwartz, Bob Held** and myself. Zoom is free, so after your evening repast, we

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Officers & Contacts

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President: Dirk Sprenger	Treasurer: Ray Schwartz
Vice President: Eric Levine	Chaplain: Bob Held
Secretary: Harry Porthouse	Seedling Editor: Kurt Moore



Continued from page one will see you at 6:30, the 4th Tuesday.

Harry will explain how you can invite guests to join on the call from the comfort of their homes. See the instructions on Page 4.

A friend who is helping me write my memoirs of the farm shared some lyrics with me. I am sharing verse one to help you relax and remember the good old days.

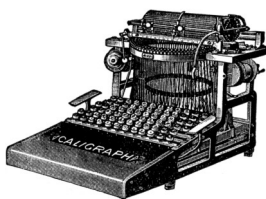
Verse 1, 1922 written on the farm (Wise Road, Coleman MI)
by Byron H. Doty of Michigan, Copyright unknown.
*There's a spot I can never, no never forget, its beauties are precious to me
The fields and the woodlands all nature displays as I ponder in deep reverie
The folks there are happy as folks ought to be, secure from all danger and harm
I'll ever remember the happy days spent with those that I love, on the farm.*

Thank you for supporting your club.

Happy Birthday to the folks we missed seeing in April.

Dirk Warren Sprenger

Editor's corner



Send me your news for 2020!

This is your newsletter! Please feel free to send me content that you would like to share with your fellow members—upcoming events, gardening tips, resources, pictures, websites and online tools, things learned, recipes using things from your garden, deals and other great bargains, etc. Please send to me via email to me and let me know that it is for the newsletter. Kurt.

May Birthdays

Sam Moser—14th Ron Namerst –21st

Your perk is to head the chow line with our guests!

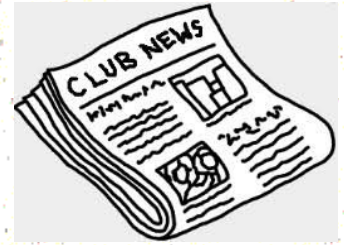
Upcoming Meeting

The Executive board will host the May meeting virtually via Zoom starting at 6:30. Harry Porthouse will host the meeting and send out the link for joining the meeting via phone, computer or smart phone. You can learn more about Zoom at <https://zoom.us/>. In addition to our regular business meeting, we'll have a discussion on what we are all doing in our yards and gardens during these times and Eric Levine will do his presentation on Vermiculture also via Zoom.



April Executive Committee Meeting Highlights

On the April 15th and 29th, the Executive Committee held meetings via Zoom. Thanks to Harry Porthouse for setting it up. Harry will also set up a May meeting for the entire club via Zoom. See the instructions on Page 4.



The Executive committee also discussed various fundraising plans to replace the revenue lost via the cancellation of the Dogwood Festival. The committee finally settled on and voted on a plan to ask members for donations. Please see the details in the next section.

Fundraising

As you know, the Mebane Dogwood Festival was cancelled. This is our major fundraising event which generates the funds we give to the Horticulture Department at ACC for a scholarship, and for general support for the FFA programs at Southern and Western Alamance High Schools and to Peacehaven Farm. In a typical year we raise about \$1500, the bulk of it being given to these institutions.

At the April 29 Executive Committee meeting, we voted unanimously to ask our members for voluntary donations to raise \$1500 to allow us to continue our mission for supporting these excellent projects. The Executive Committee also voted to lead by example and all of us have pledged or made our donations, most at the \$100 level from our recent stimulus checks.

We now ask if you could make a voluntary donation at the \$100 level, or a level that you find appropriate, to help us meet our \$1500 goal. Please make your checks payable to the Men's Garden Club of Burlington and mail them to Ray Schwartz. Thank you for considering our request and supporting your club and our local horticulture programs.

The Executive Committee

Coronavirus Information

For the latest information on coronavirus in North Carolina, please visit the NC Division of Health and Human Services website at:

www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina

2020 Plant and Garden Sales—Updated

As you are all aware, all local Spring plant sales have been cancelled by now. However, most local outlets for supplies, seeds and bedding plants are still open as they qualify as "essential business". As we get closer to the Fall, I start up a list of Fall plant sales as information becomes available.

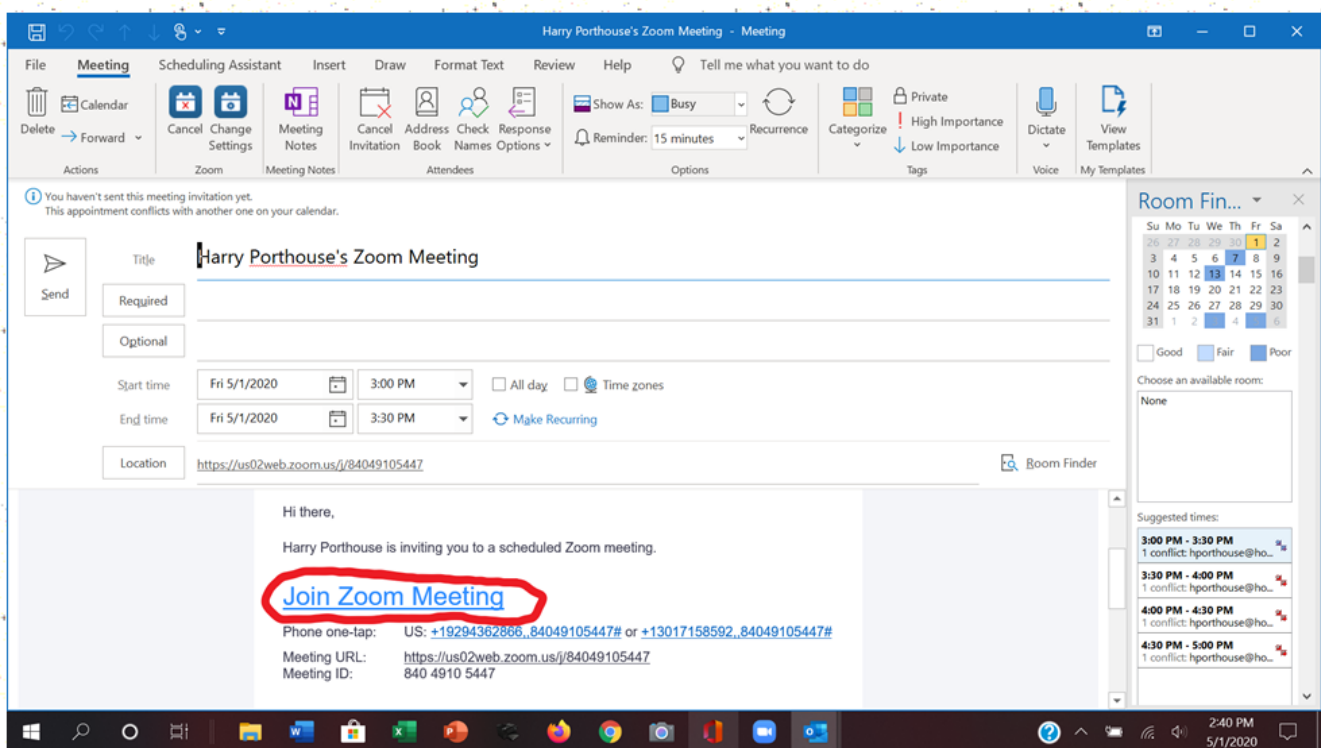
Alamance Cooperative Extension online

Our local cooperative extension has been putting more programming online as we are all ordered to shelter in. These include virtual events and retrievable program on their YouTube Channel.

<https://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7xw-AUuQN-rahmSJ43vmFg/featured>

ZOOM MEETING INSTRUCTIONS



We will send you an email containing a meeting invite via Zoom. At the scheduled date and time, join the meeting using one of the following methods.

1. To join from a laptop or desktop just click on the blue link (shown in a red circle here so you'll know where to find it).
2. To join from your smart phone, just click one of the "Phone one-tap" links shown below the circle.
3. To join by phone with no video (not recommended, as you will miss a lot of the meeting content), just dial one of the phone numbers at the bottom of the message.

You will be placed in a waiting room, and the moderator will admit you to the meeting.

Gardening in the News: Seed Banks and Vaults

Kurt Moore

Your hard drive just crashed. But, no worries since backed up your files, photos and videos on thumb drive, portable hard disk or in the cloud. But what happens when a particular crop “crashes” ... worldwide? Well, there is a backup plan for that too, in the form of seed vaults and germplasm repositories. In fact, there are about 2,000 of them around the world, which fulfill other scientific research on plants and improving farming systems, in addition to being the world’s back-up drive on biodiversity. The USDA operates 20 in the United States often in conjunction with major universities. Even the U.S. gene banks have their own backup collections stored at the National Laboratory for Genetic Resources Preservation in Fort Collins, CO, where some seeds can last up to 75 years.

One of the best known repositories and recently in the news is the **Svalbard International Seed Vault**, also known as the Doomsday Vault, opened in 2008. It is located deep in the side of a frozen arctic mountain in Longyearbyen, Norway, and can weather any disaster from bombings to earthquakes. Its collection of 825,000 samples is stored at 0°F and because of the location, if power failed the collection could last 25 years. Rather than acting as an active seed repository, the Doomsday Vault is a global backup system for the planet's plant resources. The seeds in the vault are stored under "black box" arrangements, meaning that overseers of the vault will never open or test any of the seed packages. In fact, security is so tight that no single person possesses all the codes necessary to enter the vault. In February 2020 the Cherokee Nation became the first Native American tribe to donate seeds to the vault.

The oldest seed bank is the **Vavilov Institute of Plant Industry**, established in 1894 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Nikolai Vavilov, for whom the institute is named, was a Russian biologist and plant breeder. Vavilov was one of the first scientists to understand the importance of crop diversity and played a major role in raising awareness of the importance of genetic conservation. Its global collection contains hundreds of thousands of specimens.

The **Millennium Seed Bank Project** is located at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, United Kingdom. Its goal is to eventually store and protect more than 24,000 global species of plants. It also stores samples of the country's entire native plant population, including several hundred endangered species. The MSBP collaborates with other seed banking organizations around the globe by sharing information or assisting in seed collection. Seeds remain in their country of origin, but the Kew location stores duplicates for backup.

What about non-seed bearing plants and crops? For starters there is the gene bank at the **International Potato Center** in Lima, Peru, which began with a donation from the Peruvian National Potato Program of approximately 1,800 potato germplasm samples comprising traditional cultivars. The center now holds 4,727 cultivars from 17 countries (mainly from the Andes) and improved varieties. The entire clonal collection is conserved *in vitro* and distributed internationally as tissue cultured materials. **The World Vegetable Center**, headquartered in Tainan City, Taiwan, is the world's largest public vegetable germplasm collection, holding more than 59,500 different germplasms from 156 countries. It has over 300 staff distributed around the world’s tropical regions. The **Center for Tropical Agriculture** in Cali, Colombia holds cassava as well as forage crops for livestock and 37,000 types of beans. Various types of yams, plantains, bananas and cassava are among the holdings of the **International Institute for Tropical Agriculture** in Ibadan, Nigeria, as well as groundnuts, cowpeas, and soybean. Meanwhile, the **International Rice Research Institute** in Los Banos, Philippines, has (you guessed it!) rice.

2020 Programs—**updated**

With our meeting cancellations, our speaker schedule is constantly changing. But we still need input to round out the 2020 program agenda. Give us your input on suggested topics and speakers. We still need programs for July and August.

As we learn more about Zoom, we will consider trying a future presentation on Zoom, if we still cannot meet in person.

May— **“Vermiculture”, Eric Levine - to be rescheduled**

June— “Beekeeping in 2020: the Basics and Challenges”, Tony Abbruzzi

July— OPEN. Please suggest speakers and topics

August—OPEN. Please suggest speakers and topics

September—Annual Picnic/Social. Place TBD. Spouses invited.

October—Meet our donee organizations—PeaceHaven, ACC and Western & Southern FFA programs.

November—“Lasagna Gardens”, Gail and Kurt Moore

December—No Meeting.

From the Members



Eric's Heirlooms

By Eric Levine

Greeting, fellow gardeners! Beginning with this month's newsletter I will be writing a monthly column with a spotlight on heirloom and open-pollinated vegetable and fruit varieties. This month, I will start with a brief discussion of open-pollinated, hybrid, and heirloom seeds, followed by a highlight of a particular heirloom vegetable that has a bit of significance to me.

First off, what is an heirloom? To better understand an heirloom, we must first understand at a high level the concept of open-pollinated seeds versus hybrid seeds. At the most basic level, an open-pollinated seed is one that is genetically stable. This means that after following the proper seed-saving techniques for a particular seed, the seed (when propagated) will produce results consistent with the parent plant. This is in contrast to hybrid seeds (denoted as "F1" or "Hybrid" on seed packs), which are first generation cross-breeds from two different varieties of the same species. Simply put, sow an open-pollinated seed, and you will get a plant like the parent. Sow a hybrid seed, and you are rolling the dice (you may get something, you may get nothing, but you will not get something consistent with the parent). What does this have to do with heirlooms? Heirlooms are a subset of open-pollinated varieties. Arguably, no formal definition of what constitutes an heirloom exists; however, my favorite definition comes from Craig LeHoullier in his wonderful book, [Epic Tomatoes](#). He defines an heirloom as, "*an open-pollinated variety that has history and value embedded within its story.*" All heirlooms are open-pollinated, but not all open-pollinated are considered heirlooms. This may be due to an inability to trace

a historical lineage, and/or quantify a variety's age, but to me that does not diminish the value of something not deemed "heirloom." An open-pollinated variety that is meaningful to its grower should be preserved and shared. Isn't that how an heirloom comes to be in the first place?

In this inaugural column, I want to highlight a vegetable that was an accidental jumping off point in my heirloom/open-pollinated adventure...the Peach Habanero pepper. Despite the name, The Peach Habanero does not taste like a peach (so I highly advise against taking a bite straight up, unless you know what you are doing). The peppers are peach colored at maturity and roughly between two and three inches in length. It is fiery hot (150,000-350,000 Scoville units*) with a notably fruity fragrance and is of Caribbean origin. Often used in the creation of hot sauces, the pepper can successfully be dried and ground for use as a powder.

Why is this pepper meaningful to me? In the summer of 2018, I grew six healthy plants from seeds purchased in 2015 (but never previously grown). I honestly cannot remember why they made it into my cart (knowing myself, probably a sale item), but I finally decided to sow them to test for viability. I grew six very healthy plants, and when harvest time came I tried to save as many viable seeds as possible. In 2019, I took a stab at a dense planting technique (picked up from Craig LeHoullier on YouTube) using my previously saved seeds, and wound up growing twenty-seven plants which grew to over thirty inches each.



Although this produced far more peppers than any one person needs, it was in this experience that the power and pleasure of seed-saving took hold. I love the idea that I am now of a steward of this variety, as I can carry it forward and share it with friends and family for the rest of my life. With a little luck, a personal account like this will inspire someone else to look at their favorites in a different way, and help to carry their story forward.

To close, I leave you with this quote from Minnie Aumonier...*"When the world wearies and society fails to satisfy, there is always the garden."*

Editor's Note: Scoville Units

For those who do not know, The Scoville scale is a measurement of the pungency (spiciness or "heat") of chili peppers, as recorded in Scoville Heat Units (SHU) based on the concentration of capsaicinoids, among which capsaicin is the predominant component. American pharmacist Wilbur Scoville created the method in 1912, known as the Scoville organoleptic test. The Scoville organoleptic test is the most practical method for estimating SHU and is a subjective assessment derived from the capsaicinoid sensitivity by people experienced with eating hot chilis. At the low end of the scale, bell peppers run at close to 0 SHUs. Jalapenos, while hot for some people are also relatively on the low end at 2500—10,000 SHUs. The habanero and its cousins the Scotch Bonnet, Datil and Rocoto range from 100,000—350,000 SHUs. At the upper end of the scale in the 1,500,000 to 3,500,000 SHUs are the Trinidad Moruga Scorpion (world's hottest), the Carolina Reaper and most law enforcement pepper sprays.