

The Seedling – December 2020

Volume 45, Issue 12

The Men's Garden Club of Burlington NC

<https://burlingtonmensgarden.club>



Next Meeting: January 26, 2021 Bring a guest!

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

Topic: *No Meeting*

Send suggestions for 2021 programs

A Message from President Dirk Sprenger

Dear Members and Friends of the Garden Club

I love December and reading about Holiday plants. We have learned so much about milkweed in recent weeks. Not a holiday plant, but it is endangered. My belief is that it is not a weed at all, but was misnamed by pioneers who tried to make a casserole with it. The monarch butterfly needs it as the staff of life. We need each other and our last two meetings were amazing.

My thanks go to Harry for the program in November about butterflies and milkweed. December will be a time of preparation and relaxation.

Reflecting on the gains and losses of the year is important. Our friends Joe Castagna and Jon Black

passed away. Both were very active in this club and we miss them. We achieved many goals. Visitors came to some of the Zoom meetings. We had some excellent speakers from outside the club. We raised as much money as we did the year before. We enjoyed our first November picnic and learned how to use our gardening skills to grow more food. We shared seeds and apple-wood. Learning the time to get orchids on sale and how to keep them alive was a real plus in my book. Thanks Ray!

We canceled the plans to sell plants at the Dogwood Festival very early in the year, saving us money and prep work. The emphasis this month is planning for an election - the kind with no TV ads. A slate of officers will

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be presented in the January Seedling News. I have high hopes that we can all stay safe and come back stronger in the spring, using our faith and our minds to overcome the challenges of life.

As I ponder the pros and cons of weeds, I stumbled into this description of tumbleweed as a **reverse pioneer**. I'm referring to the ones who caused the dust bowl (aka the dirty thirties) and loss of soil in Midwestern states.

"Though it (*Kali tragus*) was often a destructive agent, this plant became one of the first to appear on fields in the dust bowls on the American prairie. In the shade of its wide branches insects, birds, and small animals found shelter. Its infinite seeds fed returning quail, gophers, and squirrels, and its young plants fed deer and antelope." (1978 *The plants that transformed America* by Claire S Haughton). Although the problems from this weed were huge, it played a role in recovering land. Now, as the 2020 pandemic rages on, it is playing a role in making us grateful for certain things, creative, cautious and resilient.

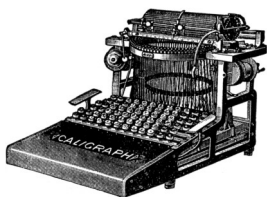
This British man was thinking of eternity when he wrote this, I suppose. He popped up on my screen last week as I worked on my first novel. "*Words are the only things that last forever; they are more durable than the eternal hills*" **William Hazlitt** (April 1778 – September 1830) essayist, literary critic, painter.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Dirk Warren Sprenger

Editor's corner

Send me your news for 2021!



New year starting soon. Please feel free to send me new 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.

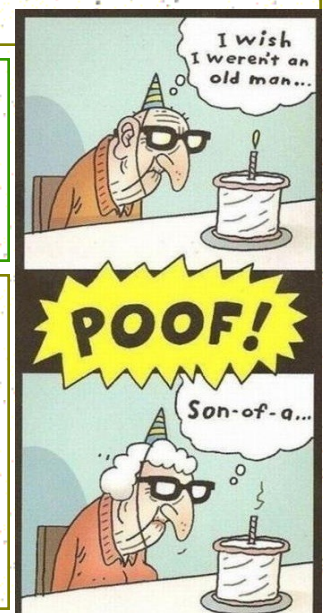
December Birthdays

Michael Bradley—17th

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

Upcoming Meeting

There will be no regular or Zoom meeting in December. The Executive board will host the regular January meeting virtually via Zoom starting at 6:30. Harry Porthouse will send out the link for joining the meeting via phone, computer or smart phone. Login instructions are on page 4. You can learn more about Zoom at <https://zoom.us/>. Topic TBD. We will send out an update when available.



November Meeting Highlights

We held our regular November meeting by Zoom arranged by Harry Porthouse. Instead of a speaker, we watched two short videos about milkweed which is a host plant for endangered Monarch Butterfly, whose populations have been declining for the last two decades. Thanks to Harry for finding the videos.



We had a short business meeting. We continued discussions on growing our membership and the publicity required to do that in 2021.

For our upcoming January meeting we will be presenting a slate of officers for 2021. Please attend this and future meetings as we need a quorum to decide on club matters.

We also need suggestions for topics and speakers for our 2021 schedule.

2021 Dues are Due

Be sure to get your annual dues (\$15) paid for 2021. Send those to Ray Schwartz, our Treasurer.

In Memoriam

John Martin Black

1934-2019



We recently learned from Dudley Clinard, that former club member John Martin Black passed away in June of last year. John had been a long time club member and also had been the editor of the Seedling.

John was born February 4, 1934 in Durham, NC. Mr. Black was preceded in death by his parents Martin and Ann Black and daughter Linda Joan Black Young. He is survived by his wife of 53 years; Joan Parker Black, 4 daughters; Joanne Lemmo from Melrose, MA and Chapel Hill, NC, Susan Yearling from Indiana, Helen Black from Mebane and 11 grandchildren.

Mr. Black was a member of Cedar Grove UMC Church and loved his church. He enjoyed baking bread, traveling, Duke and served in the Korean war in the United States Air Force, as a Captain. John retired from Exxon in 1984 and began his second career with his wife, Joan. Together, they started their own business, TACSI (Triangle Audio Communications Systems, Inc.).

A memorial service was conducted on Saturday, June 8, 2019, at the Cedar Grove UMC Church in Cedar Grove, NC.

<https://obits.thetimesnews.com/obituaries/thetimesnews/obituary.aspx?n=john-martin-black&pid=193074709>

ZOOM MEETING INSTRUCTIONS

This isn't hard! **We need your attendance.** We have rarely had a quorum to conduct regular business.

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. Note: You do not need a camera to participate.

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.

A screenshot of a Zoom meeting invitation email interface. The title is 'Harry Porthouse's Zoom Meeting'. The start time is 'Fri 5/1/2020 3:00 PM' and the end time is 'Fri 5/1/2020 3:30 PM'. The location is 'https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84049105447'. The email body contains the text: 'Hi there, Harry Porthouse is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.' followed by a blue link 'Join Zoom Meeting' which is circled in red. Below the link are the phone one-tap numbers, the meeting URL, and the meeting ID: 840 4910 5447. On the right side, there is a 'Room Finder' sidebar with a calendar view and suggested times: 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM, 3:30 PM - 4:00 PM, 4:00 PM - 4:30 PM, and 4:30 PM - 5:00 PM.

Gardening in the News—Traditional Christmas Plants

By Kurt Moore

The Christmas season incorporates many plants into its décor. Christmas differs around the world and in America we associate it with specific plants, some also used by other cultures. The first Christmas celebrated in what is now the United States was in Tallahassee, Florida in 1539 at the encampment of explorer Hernando de Soto. As you can imagine, it was not anything like today's celebrations. While Christmas was brought to our country by Europeans, we ask did all the associated plants originate in Europe?

The **Christmas Tree** tradition started in medieval Livonia (present-day Latvia and Estonia) and adopted later by German Protestants. By the mid-19th century it had spread through the Baltic countries, first among the upper class, and brought to Quebec by Hessian soldiers in 1781. The tradition rapidly spread through the United States in the mid-1800s. Fortunately, the United States has no shortage of the conifers used for trees, such as spruce, fir and pine. North Carolina produces 19% of real Christmas trees in the U.S. (96% of which are Fraser fir), second only to Oregon.

Poinsettia, which we buy and give in pots, is actually a tropical flowering shrub. Prized by the Aztecs, the plant originated in Mexico and has been associated with Christmas for several centuries. It has spread throughout the world and as a kid living in the Philippines, we had them as hedge plants in the yard.

Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe find their way into Christmas via old pagan winter festivals in Celtic Europe where Christianity was a late arrival. **Holly** trees and shrubs are another abundant evergreen that grows wild across the globe with more than 400 species. Like conifers and ivy, it is also used in wreaths and boughs.

Ivy has been used in winter festivals for thousands of years, even outside of northern Europe including the ancient Roman holiday of Saturnalia. Various species are indigenous to Europe, northwestern Africa, across south and central Asia and east to Japan and Taiwan.

Mistletoe is comprised of various species of the genus *Viscum* that are native to the British Isles, Portugal, Spain, Morocco and southern Africa, while the eastern mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*) is native to the United States and Mexico.

Christmas Cactus, so called because it blooms this time of year, is one of nine species of *Schlumbergera*, native to the coastal mountains of southeastern Brazil where they grow wild on the surface of rocks and trees. They were cultivated in Europe by the early 1800s. If your cactus develops somewhat different colored blooms next year, it is because temperature during bud formation affects the hues.

The genus **Amaryllis** finds its way into Christmas from the Western Cape region South Africa. With only two species, the better known *A. belladonna* has become in recent years associated with Christmas because when it is grown indoors (often forced) it blooms in November and December. When grown outdoors, it naturally blooms in the spring and summer. It is cold hardy to Zones 6—8 and we have had success in over-wintering them in the ground here in North Carolina.

From the Members

Member photos:

Bottom: Fall daffodils from Dirk's yard.

Opposite page top: Our club picnic, socially distanced, November 7 at Springwood Park.

Opposite page bottom: Last harvest before the Tuesday, November 24 frost from Kurt's vegetable garden. Lot's of peppers, a few tomatoes and three colored carrots. We still have more carrots in the ground as well as horse radish, leeks, cluster onions, and garlic.



