

Horticulture News!

October Gardening Tips from the Horticulture Committee

Martha Pendergast, Horticulture Chair



“I like muddling things up; and if an herb looks nice in a border, then why not grow it there? Why not grow anything anywhere as long as it looks right where it is? That is, surely, the art of gardening.”

Vita Sackville West, creator of the Sissinghurst Castle garden

Hello October!

We feel the change in air, a shift in wind direction, now frequently from the North. The temperatures are dropping and as the sunlight changes, we come to know in our hearts what our gardens already know: it's time to wind down. We may be ready for this or we may not, regardless, time marches on. Chin up! Look at all the beauty Mother Nature and we have created in our gardens this year! We can be proud of the work we put in. Have you stopped by the Club's Colonial and Herb Gardens at the Museums on the Green or the other garden areas managed by our FGC Committees? Say thanks to those committee members who've worked Spring, Summer and Fall to maintain and improve those special gardens. Have you taken the time to visit a hard-working gardener-friend to share in the beautiful results of her or his efforts? Have you had a chance to invite a friend over to see yours? There is still time and good weather remaining at this end of the beautiful shoulder season of the Cape Cod Fall. We continue to tend our gardens, take walks, swim (yes!), sail, maybe play golf or tennis, maybe one last croquet or badminton game on the still-green lawn or watch a beautiful sunset or sunrise. We have even deeper gratitude now for these special moments as we know this time is fleeting. We savor the good moments still available to us in 2023!

Our gardens need our help now. Cold winds will soon blow and the inevitable hard frost will arrive. Be sure to finish any planting or transplanting by early October to give plants a chance to settle in. Fall cleaning includes cutting the dead weight off our beloved plants and, like a visit with a talented hair stylist, our plants look refreshed and younger after their makeover! We are laying the groundwork for beautiful Winter and Spring gardens now. Cut down and dispose of any plants with powdery mildew such as Monarda and Peony; cut off

the seed heads of any of those prolific self-seeders that you do not want to spread further such as Cleome, Queen of the Prairie, Butterfly Weed, Hollyhock Mallow, Lamb's Ear, Campanula, Rose of Sharon, Monarda, etc....you know the troublemakers in your yard! Now is a good time to trim to keep them in check and consider replacing them with a sterile variety for less work in the future. Leave some seed heads for the birds such as Rudbeckia, Helenium, Echinacea and Rose Hips. Birds love Zinnias so keep some for them but do harvest and dry some for next year's garden as well. Clip and dry herbs and harvest seeds; save seeds from your favorite heirloom tomatoes and favorite veggies as well. Next year you'll be glad you did.

Pollinators are lingering and we hear the song birds, still! How beautiful! Our October gardens may boast late or still-blooming varieties of some perennials; the Dahlia, Liriope, Sedum and Zinnia are in bloom, still maybe some lace-leaf hydrangea and the final flush of Roses has arrived all of which provide wonderful food sources. This lovely scenery is a brilliant testament to all the hard work we have done and lessons we have learned. Though it is awfully sad to see plants fading, we happily remember: no more aphids, Japanese beetles, leaf hoppers earwigs, slugs, caterpillars or new weeds to contend with... for now.

After the cleanup is finished and your spring bulbs are on hand for planting soon and your favorite soil-fortifying mulch (seaweed, bark, cocoa or rice hulls, chopped leaves, pine needles, pine cones, boughs/branches, hay, etc.) is stocked and ready to spread, just maybe there is time before that hard frost to start that good book in that stack of good books you know you want to read. Get the firewood, kindling (or gas fireplace remote!) and teapot ready!

Have a good gardening tip you'd like to share? Drop your suggestion in our Tip Jar: the "**Horticulture Tip of the Month Jar**" that is, at the Flower of the Month table. Be sure to put your name on it so we can quote you as the source!

Have a plant in your garden that you would like to display? Exhibit at the Flower of the Month program! Our table is set up each month at the back of the room for members to display their horticulture and even arboriculture including: flowers, shrubs, herbs, vegetables, fruits and trees, and compare notes with other gardeners. Come early to the meeting and we will help you set up your entry with glass vases ready and index cards available for you to tell us the Botanical Name and Common Name of your entry and be sure to put your name on the back. Select your entries with good form, condition and color and after the meeting come check your card to see your score of a possible 5 points! Check page 25 of your yearbook for additional info on the Flower of the Month program. Even if you are not submitting an entry, stop by to see the beautiful entries from fellow members and to say Hi. We love talking about and sharing Horticulture!

Flower of the Month Program News- The Horticulture Committee happily reports that participation in the September Flower of the Month exhibit was at an all-time high with 38 beautiful entries from 13 exhibitors. Provisional Member, Cathy Slavin, was a big help in setting up the table, cards and entries and helping with the scoring. Thanks to all who participated!

The September Swap- Chatting about gardens and plants and exchanging beautiful varieties of Verbena, Lilac, Penstemon, Shasta Daisy and New England Aster as well as a number of stunning house plants was what it was all about on Sept 6th at the first September Swap sponsored by the Horticulture Committee. Thanks to all who participated! We are looking forward to the Spring Swap in May.

The Spring Swap- Will take place the first week of May and will include some of the plants exhibited at Flower of the Month program. Have a favorite plant (indoors or out) that you can divide and share? Please label and bring it! This is a Members Only event. Bring a plant, take a plant. There is no charge and no RSVP is required. It's all about making connections with fellow gardeners in the Club. This is a great way for members to get to know each other, to compare notes and share our love of horticulture! Please do label the Botanical and Common name of your donated plant.

Tip of the Month- October

October is a great time for soil-fortification; consider using seaweed! Seaweed is good for the soil. It contains growth hormones which increases the speed of cell division and growth. It can be used as a foliar spray to repel aphids, flea beetles, spider mites and scab. When used as a mulch or as a soil additive mixed with fish meal, seaweed meal, or manure it slowly releases nutrients that plants need. It improves soil texture adding as much humus to the soil as manure, it increases root growth and reduced fungi in both plants and soil. It also contains the hormone Mannitol that enables plants to better absorb nutrients in the soil. Rinse the salt off your seaweed before using. Use fresh seaweed by itself only once every 4 or 5 years and don't use excessive amounts as this can damage the soil. In the Spring, pre-soak seeds in diluted seaweed extract for 20 minutes before planting for a head start on the growing season. So hit the beach this Fall with a pitchfork and a heavy-duty bag or small barrel to gather up some seaweed for your garden!

From Committee member Lee Drescher:

In late October, if you happen to have some red or white Geraniums and some red or white Impatiens still lingering in your garden, you can replant them in pots or even in a small window box and bring them inside to a sunny windowsill or plant rack. If you have green, red or white containers, all the better. Keep the plants watered and groomed, and you will have a wonderful, live display for the Christmas/Holiday season.

We hope you enjoy the rest of your Fall days!

FGC Horticulture Committee

Featured Flower on cover: Rose **"Abraham Darby"**