



The Mason-Dixon LINE

Newsletter of the Mason Dixon Chapter,
North American Rock Garden Society

September 2015

Late Summer Greetings



The hawk in our pond, with the hummingbird feeder in the foreground.

Hi everyone,

I hope everyone has been enjoying their garden this summer. It was great to see many of you at the picnic in July. We've certainly had a spell of warm, sunny weather lately, which is nice for the pool but not so nice for the garden as things are much too dry. We've been watering a few areas but need much more.

Joe and I were sitting by the pond the other day with our glasses of wine when a darling, bright yellow male goldfinch landed on the edge of the stones, and hopped down next to the little waterfall to get a drink. He had just begun to dip his beak into the water when a bullfrog leaped out of the shadows and engulfed the poor thing in one huge gulp, then turned and disappeared under the water. I shrieked, "Get the net! Get a stick! Do something!" but there was nothing to be done. I grabbed a nearby pole and tried to chase the frog back to the surface and enact a rescue, but it was not to be. The frog was about the size of my hand, I guess. I have read that bullfrogs catch birds but never saw it before. Now I am not too sure I like bullfrogs anymore. We have seen the hawk catching frogs in our pond, and I used to feel sorry for the frogs. Joe said, very philosophically, "Sometimes the bird gets the frog, and sometimes the frog gets the bird." I do enjoy our garden, but sometimes Raw Nature breaks your heart.

At the picnic, someone asked about methods to keep ants out of hummingbird feeders. Rob Gimpel told us a story of how his father had kept a black widow spider in a jar on his desk — a jar with no lid. The spider was prevented from escaping by nothing more than a layer of Vaseline jelly. I decided to try this (the jelly, not the spider) as an alternative to the concoction I was using. I applied a gooey layer of Vaseline to the pole where our feeder hangs. I am sorry to report that it didn't work on our ants; they walked across the jelly with little problem. (Was it supposed to be Vicks Vapo-Rub?) So I went back to my recipe. Take some hot chili oil, pour it into a cup, add a few spoonfuls of ground red chipotle pepper, and stir it up into a paste. Smear the paste on the pole. This seemed to keep the little ants out of the feeder pretty well. I guess it gives them a hotfoot. Or six.

— Susan Stiles, Editor



Spicy stuff that ants don't like.

FALL TIPS FOR YOUR GARDEN

from Rene Monaghan

If your mulch is less than 2" thick you should probably top it off with another inch. A good base of mulch keeps the ground from freezing and thawing. This back and forth is more damaging to the roots of plants than staying frozen all winter. Just remember to keep the mulch at least 6" from the trunk of trees and shrubs. Some little critters would cozy up under the mulch and nibble at the bark all winter long. This could cause the death of the tree or shrub.

Use leaves collected to start a compost pile or add to

an existing one. Turn the compost every week or so for ready to use compost next Spring.

Remove all spent stems from perennials and shrubs as well as heavy leaf cover when the leaves begin to fall from the trees. Always check to learn the correct way to prune your particular perennials and flowering shrubs. There are some that are particular! Some perennials such as Salvia, Russian Sage and Caryopteris, among others, do not like to be cut to the ground. For these, leave about 6" above ground.

Trim the dead limbs out of shrubs and trees. This will encourage stronger growth next Spring and reduce the entrance areas for disease and pests. Remove dead limbs before the foliage disappears to make the job easier.

Fall is also a good time to divide Hosta, Daylilies and Irises.

Fall is a good time to plant new shrubs. Be sure to mulch them to protect the roots this winter.

Make sure your garden soil is moist going into the winter. This helps maintain temperatures and keeps the roots and bulbs moist through the winter.

Make sure you remove all water from irrigation lines and hoses. Store hoses indoors for added protection. Ceramic and Clay pots can break if left outdoors where they can catch rain and freeze. If you can, bring them into a garage or at least under cover for the winter. If neither of these are an option, remove the soil and turn the pots upside down.

Plant your Spring flowering bulbs before the ground freezes, late October or early November to be safe.

Lawn Care:

Fall is the best time to overseed, aerate and fertilize your lawn. Use a fertilizer higher in Phosphorus. A 12-25-12 would be a good choice. The middle number is the Phosphorus percentage.

The Mason-Dixon Chapter Needs You!

Our program coordinator, Marika Sniscak, is stepping down at the end of this year. A new program person or group is very much needed in order to organize speakers and garden visits for 2016. We usually have 6-7 speakers a year, and 3 or 4 garden trips, as well as 2 plant sales, one picnic, and sometimes one workshop as well as the Members meeting. At the picnic in July, we discussed a few ideas, since putting together a whole year of programs is a lot for one person to do. One idea was to join forces with the Potomac chapter and possibly share some speakers, trips, or have common meetings. Another idea is to have a group of volunteers to work together to coordinate meeting agendas and trips. (So far, Joe Donovan has volunteered to plan a garden visit to a nursery in the Baltimore County area.) Jerry Hudgens and Bill Yonkers are willing to continue as membership chair and treasurer. Susie Leslie is currently handling the plant sales. Susan Stiles is willing to continue to produce an occasional newsletter and would appreciate help with content, such as articles and photos, or team up with a co-editor who would like to learn and eventually take over. Joan King would like to step down as well, so a new chairperson is also needed. Other volunteers are needed to each take on an aspect of planning, line up a speaker, find local gardens to visit, host the picnic, etc. To quote our grandson, "What's gonna work? Teamwork!" (Usually repeated three times.)

Please consider your schedule and commitment to our chapter, and come to the next meeting with your ideas for further discussion. Thank you!

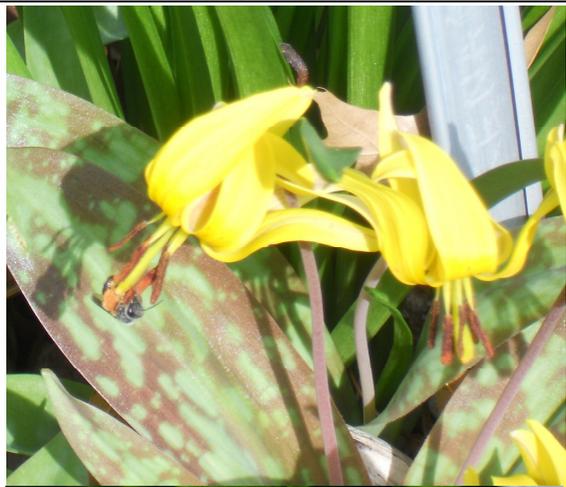
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Rene Monaghan
443-910-3918
rene@gardentimedesigns.com
gardentimedesigns.com

Beautiful Trout Lilies, aka Dog-Tooth Violet (Erythronium)



Here are some native Anthophorinae (digger) bees on trout lilies. The males (top photo), with long antenna, don't look like the females (bottom photo) but I'm pretty sure they're the same species, since bunches of males hang around attempting to mate with the females.

--- Doris Goldman

It is my recollection that there are two forms of trout lily, one that tends to clump and bloom more and another that spreads mostly by stolons and seldom blooms. I could be wrong about this but I believe that either Tim Draude or Mike Slater could clarify this for you; I think one of those two had talked about it at one time... I have millions of the non-bloomers all over the place. It seems the ones in more moist areas tend to bloom more. Also, one component of this phenomenon may be that they cycle through a bloom year then need years to regain strength to bloom again; I do not know that trout lilies do this, but other woodlanders do (e.g., Jack-in-the-Pulpits).

— Jerry Hudgens



At one of our get-togethers recently, someone was asking about trout lilies and how long they take to bloom. The name “Dog Tooth” comes from the shape of the bulbs that resemble a dog's canine tooth. “Trout Lily” refers to the shape and speckled pattern of the foliage. We have a couple of dozen that we planted last fall which are blooming heavily this spring (above photo). They are a variety called 'Pagoda' and I bought them from Colorblends. These are taller than the wild ones, brighter yellow, and have multiple flowers per stalk.

<http://www.colorblends.com/Wholesale-Flowerbulbs/Specialty-Bulbs/Trout-Lily#.VUdPwPDPfVp>

Along the stream near us there are many large spreading beds of trout lilies that extend from the road to far up into the woods. They are blooming sparsely, and not just the two-leaved ones; many of the single-leaved ones have also put up flower stalks. The flowers are much smaller, and have a coppery tint to the petals. The leaves are much more spotted.

— Susan Stiles

Cultivation

Choose a location where the soil is evenly moist during the early part of the year when these plants are actively growing. Areas that are a bit drier in summer and fall are fine as dog tooth violets are dormant during those times. Look for light to partial shade or dappled shade, such as under deciduous trees.

Plant the bulbs in loosened soil about 5" deep and 2" apart, with the pointed end facing upwards. After planting, water well settling the soil around the bulbs. Roots will form in the fall. Top growth and flower stems will form in the spring. These make lovely cut flowers, so do pick them for your bouquets.

After blooming has finished for the season, leave the foliage to sustain the bulbs for the next season. Clip off any spent flower stems if you like. The plants become dormant in early to mid-summer. In spring, the dog tooth lilies will reappear and over time will gradually developing into big clumps.

2015-2016 Calendar of Events and Meetings

We meet at the Norrisville, MD branch of the Harford County Public Library, located at 5310 Norrisville Road (MD Rt. 23) in Norrisville/White Hall, MD 21161. The meeting room is open at noon for our lunch social. Bring your lunch! The meeting begins at 1:00 PM.

In the event of inclement weather, Marika will notify members by email by 10:00 AM on the day of the meeting if the meeting is canceled. If you do not have email, and are not sure if the meeting is canceled, please call Marika at 410-461-1923 before 10AM.

September 19, Saturday – Norrisville Pavilion

We will have our plant sale as usual. Sale starts at 10am, those bringing plants please arrive by 9:30.

October 17, Saturday – Norrisville Library Judy Glattstein, a well-known garden designer and writer, will be our speaker on October 17. Her website at <http://www.bellewood-gardens.com> provides information on her background, publications and garden. Judy will be presenting "Patterns in Nature" as voted on by members at the picnic and via email. A special thank you to Beth Babikow who will be hosting Judy overnight and bringing her to the meeting on Saturday.

November 21, Saturday – Norrisville Library

Last February, our member Sue Leslie and her nephew Ed savored the true flavors of New Zealand with the help of a past student who lives on the North Island and her neighbor's family who live on the South Island. Through the magic of PowerPoint, Sue will take you along on a photographic journey from the North to the South Islands, and give you some insight into planning your own trip along the way. Ride a train along the coast, cross a glacier, soak in a thermal pool, walk the best day hike in the world, and sail a fjord.

December

Tentative: Seed packing workshop, details to follow.

January 16, 2016

Members Meeting. Please bring used books for sale, and photos or a slide show.

Marika will reserve the meeting room for January and the pavilion for June and September. Additional dates for 2016 will need to be arranged with the library as soon as plans are confirmed. The county is helpful in this regard.

To be announced:

Speakers: February 20, March 19, October 15, November 19

Garden visits to be arranged: April, May

Plant sales: June 18*, September 17

*Note about the spring plant sale. It has been proposed that we hold this event much earlier in the spring, possibly April or May. Although these are busy months and may present some scheduling challenges, it may be a better time for plants and gardeners when it comes to digging, potting, maintaining, and replanting. We should also discuss this at the September meeting.

Summer picnic: July. Host to be determined.



PLANT SALE **September 19, 2015** Norrisville Pavilion

Please bring plants or garden objects to sell by 9:15. This allows time to tag with sale price indicators, set up the silent auction, etc. The sale commences at 10:00 AM and ends when plants are gone. Please bring cash or checks (we cannot accept credit cards). If possible, have your plants tagged with proper identification and cultural information. Thank you to everyone who works so hard to prepare plants for our sale. It raises funds for our programs and workshops, and provides a great way for others to get specialty plants.