



The Falls Church Garden Club Presents

The Seedling

Summer 2026
Volume 78, Issue 6
Editor, Eva Novak

President's Perspective

Welcome to our inaugural midsummer meeting on July 20th. The presentation will address a common need for all of us: what to plant in the shade. Our speaker from Merrifield Garden Center will answer that. His topic is “Designing Woodland Gardens.” Sun or shade, our gardens need plants. To get some plants, please see People/Plants in Search of Plants/People in the newsletter. Our members have plants looking for homes and homes looking for plants. This is a great opportunity for sharing our excess, worthwhile plants.

See you at the meeting.

Rob



Summer Meeting

Date: Monday, July 20, 2026

Location: The Falls Church Episcopal at 115 E. Fairfax St., Falls Church, VA

Time: Doors open at 6:30 PM with meeting starting at 7:30 PM.

(Because of tech team absences, this meeting will be not be recorded for later viewing.)

Topic: Designing Woodland Gardens

Join Louis Ratchford for an inspirational session about the plants and design concepts of woodland style gardens. The woodland style is ideal for gardeners with shady landscapes who enjoy a natural environment with rambling paths, textured plantings and peaceful nooks to relax in their outdoor space. Louis will discuss both plant and hardscape elements that can be used to create your own woodland landscape.

Speaker: Louis Ratchford, Merrifield Plant and Design Specialist

Louis loves helping people select plants to develop their dream gardens. As a member of our trees and shrubs team at our Fair Oaks location, you'll often see Louis wearing his friendly smile and

pointing out beautiful and fragrant plants to customers and coworkers alike. A true cheerleader for new and unique plants, Louis' passion is infectious—he often has the entire nursery team excited about our latest additions. When he's not at work or in the garden, Louis spends his time offering friends and family his gardening advice so they too can enjoy the beauty of nature.



Louis Ratchford

June Garden Tour

On Saturday, June 6, many of us enjoyed Margaret Schwartz and Carol Bruch's beautiful gardens, and had a chance to see what the club has accomplished on the W & OD trail, followed by a very well-attended (40ish!) BYO lunch at noon at our usual meeting place. What a difference air conditioning and clean bathrooms make in the lunch attendance! Thanks, Rob, for having the idea and reserving the church. Unfortunately, your editor was so focused on the beauty of the gardens and the incredible variety of plants that she completely forgot to take pictures. Hopefully the 2027 Seedling Editor will be more on the ball about photos!

Removed

Information for our New Members

The **FCGC website** is fallschurchgardenclub.org. It has a members' area, with the password "TheLittleCity75". On that page, you can find some of the past Seedlings, documents with links to the meeting recordings, and the By-Laws.

There is also a **Facebook page**, <https://www.facebook.com/FallsChurchGardenClub/>, with further information.

Finally, FCGC also has an **email address**: FCGardenClubva@gmail.com You can address your questions about membership, dues, and anything else to this email, and it will be forwarded to the best person to answer.

New Plant of the Month – Flat-topped Aster (*Doellingeria umbellata*)

Brought to the sale by Elisabeth Freed, flat-topped aster (formerly *Aster umbellatus*), is a perennial with clusters of white petals and yellow center disks on 5' stalks. The alternately-attached leaves are simple, rounded, toothless spears with short hairs that add texture. Flat-topped aster begins to bloom in July, much earlier than most asters, and spreads by underground rhizomes as well as by seed. It enjoys wet-to-moist soil in full sunlight. A wide variety of pollinators are attracted to the nectar and pollen of the flowers, including long- and short-tongued bees, wasps, flies, beetles and butterflies.



People/Plants In Search of Plants/People (aka, P/P ISO P/P)

Plants:

Rob Gottel has hay-scented ferns (native) and crocosmia (attracts hummingbirds)

Elisabeth Freed has flat-topped asters, mountain mint, New York ironweed, and boneset.

Eva Novak has Canada anemone, Virginia

knotweed/jumpseed, golden ragwort, purple mistflower, and purple oxalis.

Carol Bruch has Black-eyed Susan, columbine seedlings, ostrich fern, and obedient plant.

Candace Kiman has blue iris, purple Siberian iris, New England asters, and zizia.

People:

Eva Novak is looking for maidenhair and cinnamon ferns.

Open Club Positions for 2027

Please don't skip over this! We are a volunteer-run organization, and everyone needs to take part in the running of the club at some point. We are seeking candidates for **Vice President**, a position under the able tutelage of Rob, our president; **Treasurer**, again to be mentored by the current Treasurer; and finally, **Seedling Editor**, and I will, like Rob and Peng Si, remain in the club. Contact Rob, Margaret, Peng Si, or yours truly if you are willing to take on these important, but not too time-consuming duties.

Upcoming Dates:

September 14: Regular Meeting (not Labor Day)

September 19: Annual Plant Swap and BYO Lunch, details TBA

The Fairfax County Master Gardener Program is Looking for a Few Good Members

A link to this organization for Fairfax County and Falls Church City residents is also on our website along with other master gardener programs in the area, but I highlight this program in this issue because they will have an orientation session in August.

“Express Your Interest

For residents interested in becoming a **Fairfax County Master Gardener**, please sign our list [at <https://fairfaxgardening.org/join-us/>] to receive an invitation to our informational session offered in August. You may also send an email to Enrollment@FairfaxGardening.org for additional information.

1. First, indicate your interest by signing up on the invitation list with your contact information.
2. You will receive an invitation to our informational meeting in August.
3. After the August meeting, we will begin an interview process with interested candidates to select interns for our 2027 training program.”



Garden Resources

One of our members currently in the program above shares the following resources from that program produced by VA Tech in concert with the USDA Cooperative Extension Service. Both are very helpful, and can be downloaded as well as purchased in hard copy.



1. ***Virginia Cooperative Extension Gardener Handbook*** is a guide for all gardeners in Virginia. It covers a variety of topics important for beginning and experienced gardeners, including soil health, native plants, and integrated pest management. This manual provides an understanding of the basics of gardening in Virginia and helps to build a strong foundation of gardening knowledge. Resources for additional reading can be found at the end of each chapter. We encourage readers to take a deeper dive into the topics that interest them and continue their learning journey.

<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/items/0f4b661d-c1d8-4f96-8a53-b4a3207a4401>

2. The ***Virginia Pest Management Guide (PMG)*** series lists options for management of major pests: diseases, insects, nematodes, and weeds. These guides are produced by Virginia Cooperative Extension and each guide is revised annually. PMG recommendations are based on research conducted by the Research and Extension Division of Virginia Tech, in cooperation with other land-grant universities, the USDA, and the pest management industry.

<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/456/456-018/456-018.html>

Gardening Help Wanted

Some of you recently received a request from a garden club member for a referral for “a reliable, reasonably priced helper who can assist with weeding and mulching” (and I would add, planting) and several of you chimed in that you would also be interested in hiring occasional help. If you have information about or are looking for a reliable garden worker, please contact me and I will pass that information on to the interested parties, and, given permission, will share that information in a future Seedling.

Gardening Help of a Different Sort

Courtesy of Pat Laane, some history facts about perhaps the strangest landscaping trend you’ve never heard of:

**Wealthy Brits used to hire
hermits to live on their
estate grounds.**



“Here’s a job title you won’t see on LinkedIn: “ornamental hermit.” The position was part of a strange trend that lasted roughly 100 years and saw English landowners hiring people to live in seclusion on their estates, often in the gardens, with byzantine rules governing their behavior. The practice is believed to have emerged around 1727 and ended just over a century later in 1830. Horticultural norms were in flux at the time, and some homeowners rejected the geometric designs of the past in favor of a more wild and natural approach. It would seem that nothing was considered more wild than an actual person, especially one forbidden from speaking, cutting their hair, trimming their nails, or wearing shoes.

Garden hermits were expected to do all this for a period of several months or years, and were generally paid handsomely before returning to the outside world. During their residency, they lived in hermitages, small structures that were as important in form as they were in function: In addition to providing a humble place to live, hermitages were meant to draw one’s eye to the landscape. Decorative hermits eventually fell out of fashion, but even today we have something similar adorning our yards: the humble garden gnome.”

<https://historyfacts.com/world-history/fact/wealthy-brits-used-to-hire-hermits-to-live-on-their-estate-grounds/?lctg=811452e2-125e-410a-bdd3-e7deab06a7d2>

Butterfly Table Photos:



FCGC Poetry Corner

Keith Thackrey, FCGC Poet Laureate

Madge Morris Wagner (née Morris; 1862–1924) was an American poet and journalist associated with The Golden Era. She was a contemporary and friend of Clara Shortridge Foltz and Frona Eunice Wait.[1] Some of Wagner's poems were known around the world.



For a summer issue of *The Seedling*, what better topic than the desert. For those of you that believe the desert is nothing but a barren landscape, you have never seen a desert after a rainstorm. It will put all of our gardening efforts to shame.

The Lure of the Desert Land

by Madge Morris Wagner

Have you slept in a tent alone—a tent
Out under the desert sky—
Where a thousand thousand desert miles
All silent round you lie?—
The dust of the aeons of ages dead,
And the peoples that trampled by?
Have you looked in the desert's painted cup,
Have you smelled at dawn the wild sage musk,
Have you seen the lightning flashing up
From the ground in the desert dusk?
Have you heard the song in the desert rain
(Like the undertone of a wordless rhyme?)
Have you watched the glory of colors flame
In its marvel of blossom time?
Have you lain with your face in your hands, afraid,
Face down—flat down on your face—and prayed,
While the terrible sand storm whirled and swirled
In its soundless fury, and hid the world
And quenched the sun in its yellow glare—
Just you, and your soul, and nothing, there?
If you have, then you know, for you've felt its spell,
The lure of the desert land,
And if you have not, then I could not tell—
For you could not understand.



Falls Church Garden Club Membership Form



Annual Individual Membership is \$20 for a calendar year.

Annual Couple membership is \$30 for a calendar year.

Membership runs from January 1 through December 31st.

Memberships starting after September 1st will be extended so that the membership is at least one full year.

Gift memberships are available. You do not need to be a resident of Falls Church. All are welcome!

As a club member you get:

- Nine in-person meetings featuring presentations by expert gardeners, designers, and horticulturalists
- December potluck
- Ten issues of *The Seedling* newsletter
- Plant exchange
- Reduced-price plants through group sales
- Invitation to a group garden tour
- FCGC Yearbook
- Online access to:
 - Recordings of past presentations
 - Plant request and donation form



The Happy Gardener

Membership Type: Individual _____ \$20 Couple _____ \$30

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone : _____

Email: _____

Mail this form with payment to:

FCGC

C/O Membership

P.O. Box 6944

Falls Church, VA 22040

Email: FCGardenClubva@gmail.com