

# Chesapeake Garden Club Newsletter



## Dates to Remember

### July 2009

**4<sup>th</sup> – Independence Day**

**14<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> Federated Garden Club of Maryland Trip to Seattle, Washington**

**21<sup>st</sup> - 10:00 a.m. Pot Luck Picnic  
No formal meeting.  
Sybil Russell's Home**

**24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> Somerset Co. Garden Club's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Herb Show**

### August 2009

**19<sup>th</sup> – CGC Executive Board Meeting.**

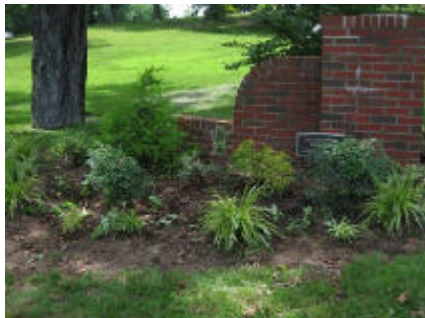
**No monthly member meeting in August. Regular monthly meetings will resume in September.**

### September 2009

**3<sup>rd</sup> – CGC Trip to Clyburn Arboretum.**

**15<sup>th</sup> – 10:00 a.m. - CGC Monthly Meeting.**

**15<sup>th</sup> – Shutter Bugs Unite Photography Contest Deadline.**



**Appreciation Gardens 2009**

## July 2009

## Gardening For a All Seasons

<http://www.chesapeakegardenclub.org>

### Plantings from the President

I am so pleased to report that our members have been working hard on our community projects.

The *Appreciation Garden* is starting to look beautiful again! Kay, Bev and I worked on the garden. We weeded and transplanted some of the bushes that were not doing too well on the right side (very Dry area) Dorrie gave us some Rudbeckia which we planted. The left side is looking good. Now we need to get some drought tolerant plants for the right side. Mother nature did her part and watered everything for us!!! Thanks goes out to Bernie and his volunteers for mulching the garden. It looks great! Bev and her team of Grace G., Kathy, MaryAlys and Sybil completed this year's planting of the *Butterfly Garden* at Battle Creek. The Battle Creek staff was very happy with the number of butterflies that were attracted last year. This is a great project that is not only a community service but very educational for the children who visit the center.

Congratulations on a job well done.

MaryAlys and Lisa have been working with Calvert garden club on a *Butterfly Exhibit* at the PF library. It also is another worthwhile community service and educational activity, which fits right in with the Battle Creek *Butterfly garden* project. If you're in Prince Frederick be sure to stop by and see the exhibit. Thanks to everyone who are helping with these club projects.

Our June meeting was held at AnnMarie garden with Don Dement giving a very informative program about photography. Some of us were able to head out and take some pictures of the gardens.

Our July meeting will be a picnic at Sybil's home. Everyone should bring a potluck dish and a plant for plant exchange. Sybil will provide refreshments. She has a pool and she has invited everyone to bring your bathing suit and towel. Unfortunately, we did not have a quorum for our June meeting we have a motion to vote on so we will have a short meeting before the festivities begin. Plan to arrive at 10:00.

May your weeds be wildflowers,

JoEllen

## **August/September Birthdays**

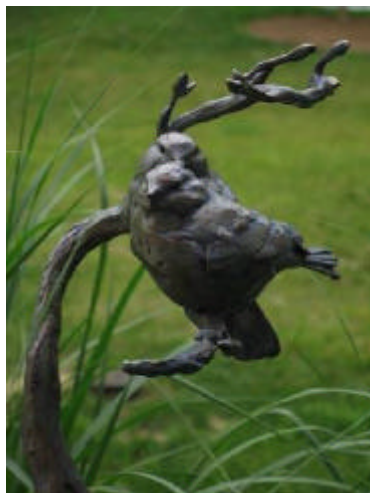
August 15<sup>th</sup> –Kathy Trimble  
August 16<sup>th</sup> –Grace Sturdevant  
August 18<sup>th</sup> –Kay Parris  
August 21<sup>st</sup> –Kitty Walker  
August 22<sup>nd</sup> –Dorrie McDonald  
August 26<sup>th</sup> –Jenny Wolf  
September 5<sup>th</sup> –Denise Wesolowski  
September 6<sup>th</sup> –Bev Steadman  
September 24<sup>th</sup>–Virginia O’Neil  
September 26<sup>th</sup>–Bernie Halloran

## **Club Awards**

Chesapeake Garden Club received a National Award “The Tommy Donnan Certificate of Merit” for its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary booklet documenting our club’s history. It was one of three national awards given to clubs in District II.

## **Treasurer’s report**

Grace Gay reported a Balance of \$4587.89 on June 16, 2009



Birds at AnnMarie Garden



## **Loss of Habitat: Let’s Help Stop It**

**By Bernie Halloran**

As my faithful gardening companion Saucey helped spread some 30 bags of shredded mulch over and around our “Appreciation Garden,” it occurred to me that we humans of the Garden Club could do so much more.

And there’s no better place to begin than with our own backyards. Indeed, I feel a dose of Crusader Rabbit coming on!

We know that “loss of habitat” is the reason that deer are hopping all over the place looking for food, that furry critters are splattered all over the roads, that amphibians are dying off, that bees have gone missing, and that we’ve been losing one species of bird per year for the past 50 years. We know these things.

We humans have moved in over big time. Consider this: in 1900, over 60 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. By 1950, only 36 percent of us lived in rural areas. And by 2000, it was only 17.4 percent. Today, more than 83 percent of our 300 million population lives in cities or sprawling suburbs.

Next door in Pennsylvania, only 1 percent of the land can still be considered “wild.” Between 1990 and 2000, impervious surfaces, like paved roads and parking lots, have increased more than 40 percent within the Chesapeake’s 64,000 square mile watershed. Ouch. If you were a possum, where would you hide?

By laying down 43,480 square miles of lifeless blacktop and planting more than 62,500 square miles of alien lawn grasses, we have really, truly taken a bite out of wildlife habitat!

I guess I’m on this rant thanks mostly to Doug Tallamy, chairmen of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University in Delaware, who can confirm that as of 2002, Delaware has lost 78 percent of its fresh water mussels, 34 percent of its dragonflies, 20 percent of its fish species and 31 percent of its reptiles and amphibians. Forty percent of Delaware’s native plant species are threatened or gone, and 41 percent of the of Delaware’s bird species that depend on forest cover are now either rare or plain absent. And who, Dear Ladies, will speak for Maryland?



We have to begin somewhere, and I guess this is the beginning of a year-long exercise in which I'll try to make the case for the very important role native plants play in sustaining balanced backyards in which mammals, birds, bats, amphibians, reptiles, good and bad bugs can live in balance; where all these critters will find food and shelter to reproduce, and where our good native plants will supply the raw energy these critters need.

It's import that we understand how and why exotic, non-natives are contributing to loss of habitat. But we don't need to go overboard or be hardcore and dig them all out.

So try this: take a pencil and pad and go outside into your yard. Make a list of the native plants you have and a list of the non-natives. See if you can identify any of the non-native invasive species you may have brought home in complete innocence from an equally innocent nursery.

Then we can get a conversation going.

## A Little Boid Told Me

By Bernie Halloran



Yes, it's that time of year again. Our cherry trees are aglow and aglitter with silken webs, spun by *Malacosoma americanum*, the Eastern Tent Caterpillar. And these social, wiggly critters are not only weaving their webs among the branches of genus *Prunus*, their favorite tree, oh no. I have them again in my river birch and dogwoods too.

So now what do we do? Can we safely spray? And what to spray? Will the birds get sick? Might they die? And do any self-respecting birds eat these ugly things?

Birds do eat a lot of things we wouldn't find the least appealing: worms, flies, spiders, beetles, rotting fish, offal, poison oak berries, weed seeds, and, well, you get the picture. Yet, it's safe to say that most birds have diets that are actually quite monotonous. Yet again, avian nutritional requirements are not very different from ours. Birds need proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals.

Just like us, birds use carbohydrates and fats for energy. And like us they need the nitrogen-containing amino acids that are the building blocks of the proteins used to construct tissue, enzymes, and all those other things essential for life. The simplest and most complex things like molting, growth and reproduction all require nitrogen, and ingested proteins are the source of that nitrogen.

Birds, like the Red-winged Blackbirds that are always trying to nest in my boat boom, are actually omnivorous. They eat both plant and animal food. Even birds classified as herbivorous plant eaters, like our much-maligned sparrows, while they may do just fine most of the year on a relatively low-protein vegetable diet, during breeding season they will gobble up and regurgitate to their young as many insects as they can.

During breeding season, Wood warblers, which are considered carnivorous, will feed themselves and their young almost exclusively an insect diet. If you're a thrush or one of the other omnivorous species, berries and other plant foods are fine for fall and winter feasting, but come breeding season, it's time for meaty, protein-rich bugs!

As for the nectarivores, the hummies, they too have to catch insects to get the protein they need to balance their energy-rich, but nitrogen-poor intake of nectar, especially when they're breeding. It is no surprise that protein-rich food sources happen to be more abundant during the

breeding season. Mother Nature has timed things so breeding season occurs when that needed nitrogen is easily available in the form of juicy bugs. Ah, the magic of evolution.

While it may not seem important to the casual observer, experiments have also shown that a bird's feeding preferences – like a child's -- can be influenced by its diet as a nestling. The best-documented learning pattern in birds is probably the speed with which Blue jays learn to avoid foods that make them sick.

Before Monarch butterflies become butterflies they feast on milkweed plants that contain cardiac glycosides, which are heart poisons. A Jay that has never tasted a monarch before will eat it and then suffer a bout of vomiting brought on by the glycosides. Thereafter, that bird will not touch a Monarch butterfly, or even one that mimics it. It's like Boid-man Bernie and raw clams.

However, if new and different kinds of food suddenly become abundantly available, many birds will opportunistically switch to this new food source. The immortalized sea gulls that saved the Mormons' crops from a locust plague did that. The same thing happens when the seventeen-year cicada or "locust" broods emerge. Many birds will switch from whatever they have been eating to gorge on cicadas. Can you blame them?

So who eats Eastern Tent Caterpillars? Cuckoos do. And Tit mice too. But there just aren't enough of them to make a difference.

The real solution to tent caterpillars is to remove and destroy egg masses during the winter, and then use an oil spray to smother the survivors. In early spring, small tents can be removed and destroyed by hand. Larger tents may be pruned out and destroyed or removed by winding the nest on the end of a stick. However, burning the tents with a torch is not recommended if the tent is still in the tree. Trees do catch fire.

If prevention hasn't worked, young caterpillars can be killed by applying an insecticide containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* var *kurstaki* or BTK. When caterpillars chew on Bt sprayed leaves, their stomachs stop working, and they soon die. However, Bt has **no** effect if you spray it while they're not eating, like in the winter—they *must* be actively feeding. And they come out three times a day to feed: a pre-dawn breakfast, lunch at lunchtime and late evening diner.

Bt is one of the safest things you can use. It will not harm you, your pets, earthworms, or beneficial insects. You won't even hurt the caterpillars of other pretty butterflies when you use Bt because *those* caterpillars are feeding on weedy looking plants in the wild or in your vegetable garden, not your tree leaves. Finally, know that birds can eat caterpillars that *just* ingested Bt, and that those birds will not be harmed.

## Behold, The Eastern Tent Caterpillar ...Do You Want Fries With That?



Great Falls, Virginia