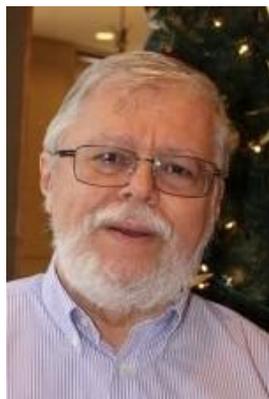


The Seed Pod



The Official Newsletter
of the
Men's Garden Club of Asheville

Founded 1940



Claude Williams

February 2020

Upcoming Events

February 4

10:00 am Board Meeting
11:30 am Lunch Meeting
First Baptist Church
(see pp. 2 & 5)

Seed Pod of the Month
(see p. 2)



Castor Bean

From the President

In January we lost our long time chef at the First Baptist Church of Asheville, Nancy McCrory. We wish her the very best in her new position at the Cove. Fortunately, we have been assured that the MGCA can continue to meet in the church's dining area. But we need to find a permanent solution for meals. I want to thank all those folks who gave suggestions and went around to other venues when we were uncertain of our situation. Thanks for coming together in support of the club and keeping me from being stressed!

On the home front, DJ and I are waiting on the lumberman to see whether we can have a portion of our forest cleared for a garden in a sunny place this year. Our seed catalogs from Harris, Totally Tomatoes, Pinetree, and Select Seed are sitting forlornly on the table waiting for when our enthusiasm revives with the hope of spring.

Nevertheless, this has been a warm and damp January to the 19th. Unseasonably cold weather the next few weeks would bring the average down to close to normal. We used to get low temperatures at some point during the winter below 0F. These days, we might see below +10F a couple of times a winter!

NCEP (see January Seed Pod) has Asheville still on track as warmer and wetter than normal for the season. February may be closer to cooler than warmer, but on average, not by much. Recently, I have heard of plants peeking out of the ground 6 weeks before they "usually" do. Protect any tender plants for the shock from much warmer to just below normal for a while. Last year, my newly planted flame azalea budded 3 times during warm winter/spring spells and was frozen out each time! Only the center third had a couple of orange flowers and leaves. Hopefully, this year will see more favorable growing weather and some recovery.

Be warm!

Claude Williams

Seed Pod of the Month

The castor bean (*Ricinus communis*) is a spectacular plant from the tropics. It can grow up to ten feet high in a single season but will die in our winters. The foliage gives the sense of a jungle plant, and the flowers and bean pod are quite colorful. The pod typically has three beans which look somewhat like pinto beans. While the plant dies with freezing, it is possible for seeds to overwinter and sprout in the spring.

HOWEVER, the plant is extremely poisonous and all parts are toxic. As noted by its botanical name, it is the source of the deadly toxin ricin. Almost amazingly, it is not illegal to grow the plant.

Castor oil extracted from the bean is a valuable chemical used for a wide variety of purposes. Many of us will recall having heard of castor oil as a laxative. The process of heating to extract the oil destroys the ricin toxicity.

If you choose to plant the castor bean, do so with care, make sure to caution children, and thoroughly wash your hands after touching the plant.

Tom Mills

Our Meeting Venue

We were notified in January that Nancy McCrory is leaving the First Baptist Church food service to work for another employer. We thank Nancy for the many fine lunches over the years and are sad to see her leave.

At the January meeting we expressed concern for where we would have future monthly meetings. The First Baptist Church has assured us we are quite welcome to continue meeting in the same room for luncheon meetings. They are looking into how they may be able to provide meals. The timing on this decision is not known.

But we have the option of having box lunches in the FBC in the interim and may need to do this for the February 4 meeting. Bottom line – We will meet at the normal location and time on February 4. Further lunch info will be provided via the calling committee.

Dues are Due!

We approved the latest update to the Club Bylaws at the November meeting, and the Bylaws are being sent to members.

Of note is the requirement that annual dues shall be paid by the February Club meeting or members will be dropped from the Club roster.

Please don't become a member of that select group! Get your dues to Bob Sharp, treasurer, at the February meeting or mail to our P.O. Box 633, Asheville NC 28802. It would be wise to notify Bob at sharp3@gmail.com if you mail in your dues.

Budget for 2020

The Board of Directors approved the Club's budget for 2020 on January 7. Our treasurer, Bob Sharp, has provided the following summary of the budget.

| | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Receipts from Members | | |
| Individual Dues | \$1,950 | |
| Corporate Dues | 100 | |
| Scholarship Contributions | 774 | |
| Total Receipts from Members and Benefactors | | \$2,824 |
| Horticultural Center Operation | | |
| Spring Plant Sales (net) | \$8,100 | |
| Summer Sales | 1,500 | |
| Fall Plant Sales (net) | 2,450 | |
| Black Mountain sale (net) | 2,350 | |
| Less Production Costs | (11,025) | |
| Net income from Horticultural Center | | \$3,375 |
| Expenditures for Community Service Programs | | |
| Scholarships Awarded to College Students | (\$2,800) | |
| Educational Programs and Presentations | (530) | |
| Container Garden Contest at Elementary Schools | (400) | |
| Costs for Beautification Sites | (150) | |
| Total Payments for Community Service Programs | | (\$3,880) |
| Expenditures for Member Services | | |
| Printing and Mailing Directories and Bylaws | (\$463) | |
| Web Site | (220) | |
| Rent for Meeting Space | (760) | |
| Annual Awards to Members | (525) | |
| Other Member Services | (645) | |
| Total Payments for Member Services | | (\$2,613) |
| General Administrative Expenditures | | |
| General Liability Insurance and Fidelity Bond | (\$700) | |
| Office Supplies and Post Office Box | (164) | |
| Telephone and Battery Pack | (230) | |
| Total Payments for General Administration | | (\$1,094) |
| Net Cash Flow | | (\$1,388) |
| Cash Available at Beginning of 2020 | | \$14,669 |

If you want further detail, please contact Bob Sharp at sharprf3@gmail.net.

Member in the News



Club member George Cecil was honored by the North Carolina Arboretum Society as the First Member of the Olmsted Society.

The society honors Frederick Law Olmsted, the father of American landscape architecture, who oversaw landscaping at the Biltmore Estate.

This membership recognizes George's generous contribution to the Arboretum. Congratulations and thanks are due to George Cecil!

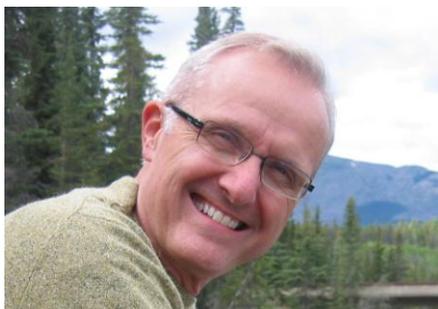
Horticulture Center 2020 Goals

Ray Geiser, Director for the Horticultural Center, has set out a number of goals for the center in the coming year.

1. Upgrade mechanical systems: electrical, watering (pumps and plumbing), air circulation, and lighting. Replace riding mower.
2. Complete Center improvements: raised beds, planting areas, mulching/composting, pavilion, shade house.
3. Alternative product mixes and sales times: change mix of annual container size and types, increased perennial growing, add late spring sale on-site for members and friends.
4. Recreational and other use of Center: potential for meetings at Center, interaction with other clubs, possible greenhouse expansion for Club and member plant wintering.

Ray has established a formal team to work with him, both to accomplish the large amount of work to run the Center, as well as to have many hands familiar with the many pieces of hardware and knowledge of how to solve problems.

New Members



Phil Barnett

Phil and Elaine moved to Asheville with younger son, Collin last June, 2019 after 13 years in Tampa. Collin was transferred to Weaverville by Publix. Eldest son Kevin and his wife Anna live and work in Berlin. Phil retired in 2019 from a career in intellectual assets and knowledge management consulting after a number of years with both The Dow Chemical Company and PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory. Phil continues his love of nature, landscaping their new property in Weaverville, maintaining a collection of rare ferns and fern allies, and hiking the Blue Ridge. Phil's sponsor is Louis Dwarshuis.



Richard Moore

Rich and his wife Nancy moved from Baltimore, MD to Asheville in 2013. Rich is a retired chemist and moved here after Nancy and he got married to get away from the crowded lifestyle of Baltimore. His main interest is in vegetable gardening and helping Nancy with her flower garden. He's trying to cultivate a food forest of apples, peaches, pears, blueberries, and other edible fruits. When not gardening, Rich likes to explore the western part of NC and go to local playhouses.

February Members' Meeting

Our February meeting will be held on February 4 at 11:30 am at the First Baptist Church. The speaker will be Club member and Horticulture Center Director Ray Geiser. Ray joined the Club in 2017 and has been very active at the Horticulture Center. He succeeded longtime Director Ted Faber in 2019.

Working at the Horticulture Center is the core activity involved in producing plants for our sales. Ray has initiated many changes and upgrades that will improve the facility and provide additional capabilities. He will discuss his goals for 2020 and will appreciate member feedback on these ideas.

We will assemble for fellowship at 11:30 am, eat lunch at noon, and have the program following lunch. Club members will be contacted regarding luncheon reservations. **As noted, we will still be in our regular meeting location**, but lunch reservations will have a choice of a box lunch for \$12. Atlanta Bread Company will provide a choice of either: 1) ham, 2) turkey, or 3) vegan. A bottle of water will be provided with the box lunch. Contact Walt Leginski at wleginski@yahoo.com for meal reservations if you have not been contacted.

This meeting is not open to the public; it is open to members, spouses, and friends only. Those not eating lunch can arrive at 12:30 for the free presentation.