

# the GAZETTE

BIRCHWOOD GARDEN CLUB

[www.birchwoodgardenclub.org](http://www.birchwoodgardenclub.org)

CHARTERED 1931

## January Topic: So You Want a Koi Pond?

From Tamara Hall

The Birchwood Garden Club will meet via Zoom on **Wednesday, January 6**, at **7:00 p.m.** You will soon receive an e-mail with instructions on how to connect to the meeting.

Our presenter for the evening will be our own Tamara Hall who will provide an overview of the myths and realities of creating and maintaining a koi pond.

Koi ponds offer a delightful relaxing experience. The fish are varied and exquisite. Plants and flowers enhance the pond view. And a pond offers tranquility, especially nice during stressful times.

All ready to sign up for a Koi pond of your own? Tamara will outline some decisions to make before you start digging to insure a beautiful pond with fish and plants in harmony.

Major considerations include pond size and shape, filter type; fish size and behavior; your competition (i.e., the predators); and plants. And don't forget the talk with your insurance agent. Also consider the seasonal activities; that is, the work to do to maintain a healthy pond where fish will thrive and beauty will abound!



## Year Round Color

Sedum Angelina is an evergreen perennial with succulent foliage that forms a low-growing mat that provides year-round beauty to the garden. One of the most dependable sedums, it will grow over a foot wide in a season and stays about 6 inches tall.



Sedum Angelina features chartreuse or golden needle-like foliage, depending on how much sun it gets (more sun results in golden leaves). It sports tiny yellow flowers throughout the summer. And in the fall, the foliage takes on an orange or rust tone that provides color all winter long.

Angelina sedum will grow in full sun to part shade; it will grow in almost any well-draining soil, but actually thrives best in sandy or gravelly soils with low nutrients.

Once established, this plant requires little in the way of watering or feeding. Just make sure this sedum does not sit in soggy soil. It will not tolerate heavy clay or waterlogged sites.

In the right location, Angelina sedum will naturalize to spread as rivers of color in the garden. Plants can be divided every few years. New sedum plants can be propagated by simply snipping off some tip cuttings and placing them where you want them to grow.



Sedum Angelina is superlative as a ground cover, spilling over rock walls, and in containers. It also makes an excellent accent for plants with dark foliage. Perfect as an edging or rock garden plant, this little jewel is virtually disease and pest-free, deer resistant, and very low maintenance.

# Black-Eyed Pea Chili and Cornbread

From Carol McBride

According to popular folklore, many people eat certain foods on New Year's Day to guarantee good fortune and prosperity throughout the year. Some eat noodles for long life, peas and beans symbolizing coins, and pork for all around good luck just to name a few. A favorite of mine is a warming southern dish to start the year off right.

2 pounds lean ground beef  
3 strips of bacon chopped  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
2 teaspoons minced garlic  
1 onion chopped  
1 red bell pepper chopped  
4.5 ounces can green chiles undrained  
3 tablespoons chili powder  
2 teaspoons cumin  
2 teaspoons paprika  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander  
28 ounce can diced tomatoes undrained  
15 ounce can crushed tomatoes  
12 ounce beer  
1 cup chicken broth  
3 cups cooked black-eyed peas  
Pepper to taste



In a large pot heat oil and add garlic cooking until just fragrant. add beef, bacon, chopped onion, bell pepper and salt and pepper cooking until beef is no longer pink and bacon cooked through and veggies are soft.

Add all remaining ingredients and heat chili to a low boil, stirring frequently. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 30-45 mins, stirring occasionally.

Serve with cornbread (symbolizing gold) and your favorite toppings.

Enjoy and may this recipe bring you all the very best in 2021.

## Garden Quiz

In which season are Mahonias at their best?



Answer on page 4

## Checking Seed Viability

January is a good time to take stock of any seeds you've saved from previous seasons, perhaps even collected from your own flowers. Do a germination test on any stored seeds to see how viable they are.

Place 10 or 20 seeds between two sheets of moist paper towel and tuck them into a loosely tied plastic bag. Place in a warm area, and check every few days.

If germination is less than 80 percent, or really slow, consider purchasing new seeds of that crop. Otherwise, just sow many more this spring so you'll end up with enough plants.



# Plant of the Month: Wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*)

By January, dedicated gardeners begin yearning for something growing in the landscape that hints of the coming spring, which is still many, many weeks away. One plant that readily comes to the rescue is wintersweet, an unusual shrub that bears flowers on leafless stems during the coldest times of the year.

Shaped like small butter-colored bells, wintersweet's blooms are a welcome sight in January's garden. And as an unexpected bonus, these blossoms are also a veritable feast for the nose. While the flowers are modest in appearance, they fill the chilled air with a marvelous, sweet scent.

Wintersweet is a large multi-stemmed deciduous shrub that can grow 10 to 12 feet high and just about as wide with an open

fountain-like appearance. It can become quite unkempt-looking if old canes are not pruned. To keep the shrub beautiful, old



canes should be removed yearly after the flowers are spent. This pruning will also encourage more blooms in winters to come.

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Wintersweet adapts to many soil types but does best in moderately well-drained sites. And for maximum cold season flower power, plant in full sun.

Wintersweet has no serious pest problems. It attracts pollinators and birds feed on the inconspicuous fruit. Wintersweet is not attractive to deer.

Wintersweet's beautiful blooms can provide a winter floral treat indoors as well. Before the shrub blooms, snip a few shoots about 12 to 18 inches long and soak them in water overnight. Then place the branches in a vase that is away from sunlight, change the water weekly, and when the buds begin to swell, move the plant to a prime spot in the home. The bursting blooms will be a treat for the eyes and the nose!

## Spend More Time in the Garden for your Health

Still working on your New Year's resolutions list? Don't forget to include one of the most important resolutions—spend more time in the garden! The health benefits really go without saying.

Garden activities like pruning, digging, raking, hoeing will all help you stay fit. To make the activity easier and less tiresome, make sure you have all the right tools to best fit the job and your needs.

Spending time in the garden will raise your spirits as well. Take time to relax and sit on that garden bench and enjoy the view. After a stressful 2020, quiet time becomes even more important to recharge our batteries and clear our minds. There is no better space to spend quality relaxation time than sitting in the garden.

A fun way to start out the New Year is to keep a garden journal of daily or weekly activities and observations. It will provide a valuable reference for planning next year's garden. Use your journal to keep track of when plants bloom, when seeds need to be sowed, when pruning needs to be done, and when vegetables and fruits are ripe. Include an inventory of the plants in your garden and what works and doesn't work!

# Answer to Garden Quiz

**WINTER - Evergreen foliage takes on a purple tint contrasting with large clustered yellow flowers.**

## Meeting Minutes

December 2, 2020

Submitted by Ann Holland



Our President, Sheri Lambert welcomed all via our Zoom meeting.

The last meetings minutes (November 4, 2020) published in the Gazette were approved. There were approximately 20 members at the Zoom meeting.

**Treasurers Report:** Nancy McMaster gave us the current bank balance. We have received \$60 in dues this month.

**Announcements:** Sheri let us know that we should send pictures we have of our gardens fall colors, interesting house plants, or any of our past garden pictures to Tom Sparks, our web master, so that they may be shared on our website.

The Fall Library Garden Clean-up went well. The six of us had the job done in an hour and a half. Thanks to all for making the job fun and easy. The rain did stay away.

Zapote Gregory announced that the Parks Dept. is planning for work parties on MLK Day (January 18<sup>th</sup>).

Our presentation tonight is the many fabulous Christmas Trees belonging to Mary Etta Foster. Mary Etta has developed the themed decorations over many years and most of the trees stay in her home year round. We saw the gold tree, the silver tree, the Victorian tree, the gardening tree, the snowman tree, and the kitchen tree. The kitchen tree had many copper ornaments to compliment the copper cookware and molds on display in her kitchen. Mary Etta started her decorated trees in 1974 and today she has more than forty at her home.

Our own Mark Turner, professional photographer, made this presentation beautiful and possible. He took the pictures several years ago and narrated the slide show.

A big thank you to Mary Etta and Mark.

The Birchwood Garden Club (BGC) is open to everyone in Whatcom and Skagit Counties who supports the objectives of the organization. BGC meets the first Wednesday of each month from September thru May. Annual membership is \$10 for an individual, \$15 for a family, due in September. Membership applications are available from the website: [www.birchwoodgardenclub.org](http://www.birchwoodgardenclub.org).

The Birchwood Garden Club Gazette is published monthly, September thru May, by the BGC. Articles, inquiries, letters to the editor, or other comments should be directed to the Editors, Ken and Stephanie Salzman, at the above address or via e-mail to: [sasalzman@comcast.net](mailto:sasalzman@comcast.net)

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### CURRENT OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

President - Sheri Lambert

President Elect - Vacant

Treasurer - Nancy McMaster

Secretary - Ann Holland

Garden Tours – Sheri Lambert & Carol McBride

Historian – Violet Hayes

Hospitality – Carol McBride

Library Garden – Ann Holland

Museum Garden – Ann Holland

Membership – Judy Lewis

Newsletter – Ken & Stephanie Salzman

Plant Sale – Cheryl Haak

Programs – Tamara Hall

Publicity – Susan Metcalfe

Silent Auction – Sandy Gurosko

Sunshine – Cheryl Haak

Webmaster – Tom Sparks