

# Spring Meeting Minutes

## March 28, 2015

### Leadership:

Co-leads: Mary Graham and Katie Ablard

Secretary: Janet Griffin

Treasurer: Riccardo Casalini

Plot Coordinator: Laura Reams

Plot Monitoring: Lisa Davidson

**Mary Graham** welcome all to the spring meeting. She and Mark had prepared a helpful power point as a reminder of **Hyatt Park Garden Member duties**:

**M** Maintain your 15 X 15 plot without hang over

**E** Email—check the email the garden has on file at least 2x weekly for possible garden announcements

**M** Meetings are required twice a year

**B** Be considerate of fellow gardeners

**E** Everyone's Energy is required to maintain the community garden—minimum of 4 hours annually

**R** Rotting vegetables in your plot are pest provoking

**S** Six inches of weeds are the limit allowable before inspectors cite

**H** Hoses should be coiled and put away and faucets maintained after use

**I** Inspection of plots commence at the end of May and take place through the growing season

**P** Pathways receive attention on workdays but are individual gardeners' responsibility

**Five-Minute Presentations** were given by members and provided important education. Power point slides will be added to the website.

### Mary—

"Friend or Foe: Ichneumons and Harlequin Bugs"—

Kill the latter—**Harlequin** are the squatter, colorful bug. Power point showed photos of various life cycle—from the eggs which are laid in spring through the nymph stage, after which they will molt six times before they become adults, depending on temperature, humidity and food. They reproduce at about 60 degrees. Between April 1-15 a female will lay 312 eggs in 12-egg rafts. By July 15-August 1—we get 48000 beetles. Between September 1-30 can get 7,592,000. To control, pick off at any stage and drown in glass jar with dish soap. If we hand-pick together, we can stay ahead. We need to control them in the garden, though they fly and can keep coming in. Favorite food is the brassicas—greens, broccoli, arugula, cauliflower, etc.

Admire the **Ichneumon Wasps**—the long tail on females is used to drill into and deposit eggs in stems where the wasp listens and hears there are larva bodies, such as squash stem borers, which they then destroy.

### Raj—

Compost—Raj asked how many are using the compost, and more than ½ raised hands. He reminded that the compost needs more **brown material**, in addition to the green that is being added. We need to bring in more dried leaves, coffee grounds, and shredded paper. Don't worry about grinding up leaves, but put the leaves in the compost bin as you are cleaning this year and bring papers and leaves from home. Ryan suggested that we incorporate spent grain from Maryland Home Brew Day on May 2. Raj reminded that

Starbucks or Vigilante would give spent coffee grounds. Some decayed woodchips from paths may be added; Raj will check and limit. Animal manure will be good, if available, and Univ. of Maryland might be source, but transport is an issue.

Raj will move the compost bins at the beginning of May and ask for volunteers to layer and turn the compost every other month to turn compost. He will mix in left-over leaf gro.

Raj brought a hand-out about home composting. Sometimes fresh vegetables peelings draw rats, but there is not much to do about it. Chris has supplied rotting vegetables from Glut to the Mt Rainier community garden, and that garden has needed **rat** protection. At home putting some hardware cloth around the compost can create barrier, but Ryan reminded that gardeners should put rotting vegetables into the tumbler, rather than the compost bins, to assist with rat prevention.

#### **Riccardo—**

Releasing Beneficial Insects—we will be introducing beneficial insects for the first time, starting with the most common ones—**praying mantis and lady bugs**. With praying mantis, we need between 2 and 20 egg cases, which have 200 eggs each. Riccardo will buy online, follow recommendations about when to release, and put them in the small flower plot at the beginning of the garden and in the new flower border. Earlier introduced the better, but will wait until warmer, as advised by the providers. As for ladybugs, 7000 ladybugs per 1/5 acre is recommended. As they reproduce, larva is the best stage because they eat everything. Having been shown photos in the PowerPoint, gardeners are cautioned not to confuse ladybugs with the Mexican bean beetle, which we hope that mantis will be eating.

#### **Chris—**

Plant Pairings and Success Stories—last year Chris started to consult *Carrots Love Tomatoes* by Louise Riotte to determine that **plants to combine** in the garden. Together some—like carrots and tomatoes—have synergistic effect on each other; other plant deter, confuse, or attract insects. Other **good** pairings include beans with everything except onions; bush beans do well with celery. Plants that do **not** go well together are peas, onions, and garlic; cucumbers and potatoes; cabbage and beans.

Chris talked about plants that help **deal with insects**: He has planted wild Jerusalem artichokes (readily available in parks and along roadsides) to draw aphids away from other plants. Marigolds also repel aphids. (Later, Smitty cautioned that the particular variety of plant is often important; marigolds need to be French marigolds not African, and the plants need to be mulched and put in soil to repel insects.) Plant radishes among the cucumbers and savory to deter bean beetles, but nasturtiums attract pests that feed on brassicas.

Productive plants: Snow peas (which Chris has planted as early as March 1) produce an incredible crop and freeze well. Among highly productive beans a bush, flat podded Roma, which is very meaty. Chris has used floating row cover on the beans to protect from beetles. He has found that pole beans now can't be grown because of beetles, but Chinese long beans might not be affected by the beetles. They are a different genus. Julia said that yarrow attracts good bugs, bees, and butterflies, and yellow indigenous one is the most potent and is perennial. Fennel bloom attracts beneficial wasps.

#### **Smitty—**

Nematodes—Photos of roots were shown to educate that root knot nematode are bad guys. These attack the roots of the plant, producing knots or galls. They don't like brassicas, but like everything else. They don't kill the plant but make the crop smaller. Smitty doesn't know if the garden has them or not, but asked that we check our roots when we pull up plants and do not compost if nematodes are present. Best way to handle is to get nematode-resistant plants, and Smitty provided a list. Female nematode can lay massive amounts of eggs in the spring. They can last in the soil for a year. As a deterrent, one can

plant rape seed in the fall. Specific variety is humus or Dwarf Essex variety, but one has to have a lot of sulfur in the soil to have it produce the poison when tilled in which will kill the nematodes. Smitty did a soil test and the ph was high 7.3, which is high. Sulfur was low.

#### **Janean—**

Bees and Neonicotinoids—Janean provided a hand-out on neonicotinoids, chemical insecticides that are very detrimental to our pollinators. While Europe has banned them entirely, US has not, and they kill or damage all the insects, good and bad. Three quarters of the world's plants require pollination. While there are other causes of the decline of honeybees, such as mono-cultivar habits—planting only one crop—these insecticides are doing long-term damage. Often times it doesn't affect the bee immediately, but the immunity is suppressed.

In our neighborhood we have several beekeepers, three who belong to our garden. While we prohibit neonicotinoids in the garden, others are using and abusing. We need to educate our neighbors. Bayer puts one out with a packet of wildflower seeds on the chemicals!

Remember when you are buying your plants, do research on where the plants come from. Buy from dealers, like Behnke's and Homestead Gardens, who have made a pledge not to use neonicotinoids. The chemical stays in the soil and the plants pick it up from the root system. Even ordering the seeds, make sure they are coming from non- neonicotinoid users. Mom's and Glut both sell approved seeds and plants.

#### **Katie—**

Blister Beetles—shown in photo as large, glossy, and beautiful—was found in garden, rapidly eating Katie's mizuna—a delicious, delicate green for salad which lasts into winter. The beetle secretes an oil which can give humans blisters if touched. It can be lethal for horses and may be traveling into the garden with hay bales. It also enjoys potatoes, beets, and can attack bees. They are very slow movers... so seek and destroy without touching with bare hands.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Lisa** is looking for one or two more people to join for inspections. The first inspection is May 27 at the end of the day. She let people know that the thing that most people got cited for last year were weeds in the path and plants hanging over. Try not to crowd your plants up near the edge. She also congratulated us all on the garden looking great last year.

**Dave** talked about plot measurements. He managed the first measuring and suggests a full re-measuring in the fall, as some plots have spread into pathways, etc. We need a way of anchoring the plot perimeter denoting flags at the edge and suggested that perhaps that we could hammer a length of pvc pipe vertically as a holder for the flags. Dave is also working on the perennial border and will announce opportunity to participate. Not a workday, because FUN.

**Ryan** asked for a replacement for website maintenance. We are grateful for this important service, which he has ably contributed for years, but he notes that he HAS a job. A good replacement doesn't need to be an expert but will need some knowledge of Sequel and PHP. There was a suggestion to put the request on the Hyattsville list serve.

**Mary** noted that the Leaf-gro for the season has been delivered. Gardeners are due 3 level wheelbarrows or 4 ½ level loads in the smaller garden cart. Put it in your garden before tax day; after April 15 anything not distributed is open to all the gardeners for additional use in the plots.

**Smitty** passed on a plug for manure tea. Recipe involved putting composted cow manure in bucket, adding water, and stirring for 20 minutes with bare arm. Sprayed on the garden, this tea is said to work wonders.

**Jen Kubit** asked for gardeners to watch for black swallowtail caterpillars. They love parsley etc. She and her kids would come and pick off and then raise them to maturity.

**Bob** asked about the garden sign project and was told to proceed with it. He and Katie discussed more fully after the meeting.

**Welcome and Introductions** closed the meeting with a pair of new gardeners--Jose and Kathy from Longfellow Street—introducing themselves and being welcomed as the new gardeners in #16.

**Refreshments** were enjoyed; thank you, co-leaders!