

Patchogue Garden Club's

Garden Gazette

"All the dirt you need to know . . . and a whole lot more!"

January 2008

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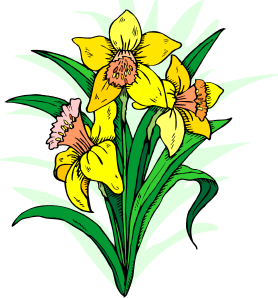
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Submissions must be received two weeks before the general meeting in order to appear in that month's edition of the *Garden Gazette*.

Happy New Year to Everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season with your family and friends.

Thoughts turn to spring and planting as the seed catalogs begin flooding the mailboxes. Climate change continues to confuse not only us, but our plants as well. Trees still have leaves on their branches; snow covers leaves that never were raked in the fall because they didn't land on the ground until mid-December. I expect to see bulbs peeping up soon if the warm spell continues.

This month's meeting will be a business meeting. Please remember to bring your baskets for the luncheon. Dues are also due at this meeting, \$20 individual and \$25 per family.

We are in need of both a newsletter editor and a speaker chairperson. Both Ruth's have resigned their posts after a job well done. Please consider volunteering for either post.

See you next Tuesday, Carol

A HAPPY
NEW YEAR

Mark the Date

- Tuesday, January 22, 2008, 7 PM, regular meeting at Swan Lake Civic club house. Please bring your Chinese Auction baskets and other contributions to this meeting. You may also drop them at Georgia Dulmovits' house, 168 E. Lakewood, Patchogue. Reservations will also be taken; bring check or cash.
- Thursday, March 13, 10:30 am, annual "Think Spring" speaker, luncheon and raffle. Mediterranean Manor, tickets \$32.00 For more information, call Georgia Dulmovits (289-0867) or Arlene Lamberti (289-3667).



C. 'Polar Ice'



C. 'Winter's Star'



C. 'Winter's Charm'



C. 'Snow Flurry'

Plant of the Month: Comely Cool Camellias

Sixty years ago the US National Arboretum received a cultivar of *Camellia oleifera*, cultivated in China for nearly 5,000 years, which proved hardy to Zone 5. Though saddled with the distinctly unattractive moniker of 'Plain Jane', it is thanks to her that we now have camellia hybrids that bloom in gardens as far north as Toronto.

Among the hardiest are 'Polar Ice', 'Snow Flurry', and a series that has 'Winter's' in the cultivar name. Sources include Camellia Forest Nursery in Chapel Hill NC (<http://www.camforest.com/>), Fairweather Gardens in Greenwich NJ (<http://www.fairweathergardens.com/>), and Greer Gardens in Eugene OR (<http://www.greergardens.com/>).

Tough enough to thrive in the mid-Atlantic region as far north as U.S.D.A. Zone 6b, these lovely evergreen shrubs produce showy flowers of pink or white over a period of 4 to 6 weeks in late autumn. What's more, petals are shed individually when bloom is completed, eliminating the tiresome task of dead-heading for the gardener.

Camellias want humusy, acid soil that is continuously moist; protection from midday summer sun; and shelter from winter sun and wind. In the north, spring is the best time to plant. Avoid high nitrogen fertilizer. Blooming in fall and winter, they are as versatile as roses, being of use in the mixed border, for hedges, groundcovers, as well as espaliers and standards.

At present, breeders are working to coax more hybrids with scented flowers (e.g., *C. 'Scented Snow'*) and more hues in the orange-peach-apricot range from two recent introductions from China. Not everything from China is bad!

"Camellias fall whole from branches. Even upon the soil, their beauty is entrancing. They are like the love affairs of court women."
-Lady Murasaki Shikibu, paraphrased from the "Tale of Genji"

"January is the quietest month in the garden. ... But just because it looks quiet doesn't mean that nothing is happening. The soil, open to the sky, absorbs the pure rainfall while microorganisms convert tilled-under fodder into usable nutrients for the next crop of plants. The feasting earthworms tunnel along, aerating the soil and preparing it to welcome the seeds and bare roots to come."

- Rosalie Muller Wright, Editor of Sunset Magazine, January, 1999

Serious Dirt from Richard Waldman

Andrew Jackson Downing, Landscape Designer & Architect, 1815-1852



A.J. Downing

When you think of influential designers that have changed the course of landscape design through the years, quite often European names head the list. But in the 1840's, Andrew Jackson Downing (born in Newburgh, New York) wrote on landscape gardening and architecture for numerous popular newspapers, magazines, and best selling books. As the editor of *The Horticulturist* magazine, he helped to change the public's taste in landscape gardening and its place in society. He was the first to call for the creation of what became Central Park in New York City along with the creation of state agricultural schools throughout the U.S. When he traveled through Europe in 1850 he met with Calvert Vaux of England who relocated to America and became a business partner with Downing. Some of their designs were for the grounds at the White House and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. A.J. Downing died in a fire aboard the steamer *Henry Clay*. In 1858 Calvert Vaux, along with the well-known Frederick Law Olmstead, was selected in the design competition for Central Park, where many ideas on the design of the park originated from writing of A.J. Downing. For more on A.J. Downing, see <http://www.newburghrevealed.org/photojournalajdowning.htm>.

Book Review: "Banana: The Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World"



The world's most humble fruit has caused inordinate damage to nature and man, and *Popular Science* journalist Dan Koeppel embarks on an intelligent, sifting through the havoc. The seedless, sexless banana evolved from a wild inedible fruit first cultivated in Southeast Asia and was probably the apple that got Adam and Eve in trouble. From there the fruit traveled to Africa and across the Pacific, arriving on U.S. shores, probably with the Europeans in the 15th century. The history of the banana turned sinister as American businessmen caught on to the marketability of this popular, highly perishable fruit then grown in Jamaica. Thanks to the building of the railroad through Costa Rica by the turn of the century, the United Fruit Company, *Mamita Yunai*, flourished in Central America, its tentacles extending into all facets of government and industry, toppling banana republics, and igniting labor wars. Meanwhile, the 'Gros Michel' variety was annihilated by a fungus called Panama disease, Black Sigatoka (causes significant reductions in leaf area, yield losses of 50% or more, and premature ripening, a serious defect in exported fruit), which today threatens the favored Cavendish as Koeppel sounds the alarm, shuttling to genetics-engineering labs from Honduras to Belgium. His sage, informative study poses the question fairly whether it is time for consumers to reverse a century of strife and exploitation epitomized by the purchase of one banana. Available from Suffolk Co. ILL. Official Web site and blog at <http://www.bananabook.org/>.

"Compelling", "fascinating", "disturbing"—*Boston Globe*

Timely Tips



And plan for spring!

☀️ We had a few warm days recently, and some bulbs got the foolish idea that spring was near—not a good idea since more icy weather is sure to come. Add a little compost and a thick layer of mulch to protect the tender new growth. This is an excellent use for the branches of your discarded Christmas tree.

☀️ In the event of snow, be sure to shake or brush off the white stuff from the branches of your evergreens and shrubs. The light fluffy snow poses no real threat, but if it should become wet and frozen, the weight dramatically increases. Branches are more brittle when the plants are dormant; the weight of the snow may snap them.

☀️ Dormant spraying of fruit trees, Cotoneaster, Dogwoods, etc. should be done this month.

☀️ It's a good time to prune deciduous trees and shrubs, but be careful not to ruin your spring-flowering ones. Wait until they've flowered to prune them.



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"Come grow with us"

Founded 1996



If you want to be happy for an hour, get drunk.

If you want to be happy for three days, take a wife.

If you want to be happy for a week, kill your pig and eat it.

But if you want to be happy for a lifetime, become a gardener!

Old Chinese saying—Happy New Year February 7, Year of the Rat