

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 31 Edition 8 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

AUGUST 2015

HISTORY OF GWC

Our garden club's current name was established in the late 20th century. However our origins date back to the beginning of the century as the Men's Garden Club of Wake County.



The recent celebration of a milestone anniversary by the Raleigh Garden Club prompted a discussion of our own rich history. If

you are a long-time member of either the Gardeners of Wake County or its precursor, the Men's Garden Club of Wake County, we would love to hear from you! Please contact Donna Farmer at farmers3rd@yahoo.com or 919.609.5833. Contact Donna as well if you would like to join the committee to get a head start on the festivities.

GARDEN GADGETS

If you ask any gardener today, "What is your favorite tool in the shed?", you are likely to get a list of specialty trimmers, shears or weeding tools. This may not be true for the next generation of green thumbs. Technology has invaded most aspects of our lives and its next target is the garden. A collection of new gadgets and must-have solutions are starting to emerge. These include new sensors to monitor plants, planter designs, cloud data sets, and smart phone apps.

Let's start with an old gadget that is seeing more use, the "Self Watering Planter Box". This great

innovation can make your plants thrive with consistent moisture for weeks. It is a clever little system that was patented in the 80's. The system uses a reservoir and a wick or membrane barrier to draw moisture to a second compartment where the plant's roots are. As long as the reservoir is not empty, the soil near the wick will remain moist. A planter box with this system will easily cost you double or triple that of a planter of similar size and quality. However, they work well and who isn't tired of watering in our summer heat.



The next item to catch my eye is the "Garden Cam". For \$100-\$200, you take high definition time lapse videos of your plants. This is a great way to observe the bees and butterflies in action or catch the

CLUB MEETINGS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Meetings take place at 7:30 pm at the JC Raulston Arboretum every 3rd Tuesday.

August 18th – Dr. Dennis Werner from NCSU will discuss fragrant plants for your garden. Dr. Werner has been part of the of Wake County's horticulture community for many years. He is a JC Raulston Distinguished Professor and former Director of the Arboretum. Dr. Werner has NCSU teaching responsibilities in plant propagation herbaceous perennials and breeding asexually propagated crops.

August 29th – The 8th Annual Paw Paw Festival. The event will be from 10am to 2pm at the Forsyth county agriculture building on 1450 Fairchild Rd. in Winston-Salem. http://www.ncpawpaw.com/NC_PAW_PAW/Welcome.html

September 15th – John Monroe will present a program on Architectural trees. Architectural Trees is a specialty tree nursery primarily serving homeowners, plant collectors, and landscape designers. Our mission is to find, grow, and promote highly ornamental cultivars of trees that grow well in the Piedmont of North Carolina. <http://www.archtrees.com/>

September 19th – 20th GWC Annual Garden Tour. GWC will provide additional details at the August club meeting. For the first time we are making the tour open to the public. As with our azalea sale the proceeds will help to fund our horticulture scholarships at NC State. There will be eight gardens on the tour, each with a unique focus and paired with a local garden artist. The cost of the tour is \$15.00 per person for the general public but is free for GWC members. We still need some assistance to staff each of the gardens and sell tickets. If you can help, please call Mark Boone (919) 571-3260.

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For membership information or to change your address contact Barbara Brown, membership chairman at the address published in the membership directory.

Club Website:
www.gardenersofwakecounty.org

GARDEN GADGETS *(continued from page 1)*

pest eating your leaves. At the very least it will provide a new perspective of your favorite blooms.



Ever wish your plants could talk to you or at least remind you to apply fertilizer or water. Well they can now with the help of modern sensors and companies like Bitponics, HarvestGeek and Plantlink. Modern plant sensors now offer to measure light, soil humidity, temperature, pH, fertilizer levels and upload the data to the cloud or your personal pc through a Wifi connection. Once the data is collected, you can get trends for your plants and recommendation through an email or text message. Some of these systems are intended for larger nurseries or farms. A few like Parrot Flower Power cost around \$60 a sensor. Who doesn't want their azaleas demanding more water or hydrangeas requesting time in the sun?

To me the joy of gardening is the

escape from my office and technology. So the next gadget is not on my wish list. I think of it as the Kcup for plants. The Click n'Grow is an all in one system. The pot base has a water reservoir and takes plant cartridges. Cartridges have different seeds and substrates to start a new plant. The pot also includes built in sensors so it can release fertilizers and water as needed. You can find different flower and edible plant cartridges on Amazon.

I have yet to own any of these gadgets but greatly enjoyed preparing this article. In my reading on future garden gadgets, two new technologies came up. New cameras that measure UV light to gauge plant health and drones used for agriculture. Neither is commonly available but may be part of our future tool shed. Please write in and share your perspective; if you have personal experience with a device mentioned or another favorite gadget.

CLUB ANNOUNCEMENT

I was glad to see everyone at the last meeting in July. It was unfortunate the power went out and our speakers could not present their slides. Each presentation, Thailand gardens from Charles and the 5 minute presentation on pickles will be made available on our website.

At the meeting, our President Sherrill Johnson announced a dues increase. For 2016, dues will be \$30 per person and \$45 per couple. This is the first dues increase for the club in many years and was discussed in detail by the Board. Our club's greatest assets are

our members, who volunteer their time and engage as a community. However, the club has fixed operating costs that are funded by the membership dues. In recent years these operating costs have increased.

To continue all the wonderful activities our club supports such as *The Clodhopper* and speakers, a dues increase was necessary.

Thank you for your continued support and participation in GWC. If you have any questions regarding the dues increase please contact a board member.



VISUALIZING GARDENS WITH GOOGLE EARTH

– Laine Thomas

When Will Farmer asked for recommendations for the GWC Beautification Awards I knew immediately which houses I wanted to nominate. One is near my house, on a steep hill overlooking an industrial area and train yard that borders our neighborhood. You would expect such a property to languish. Instead, I see the owners outside gardening all the time. They are constantly working on the landscape, painting trim, mulching and



adding ornamental details. The house is the first thing I see when I drive into our neighborhood from Capital Boulevard and it makes me smile to see a garden on the corner instead of a weed patch. There are grand, large scale gardens that are probably more deserving of awards, but this one impacts me. To nominate it, I needed the address. That should be easy to get, but somehow I never remembered to stop and write it down.

Instead, I looked it up on Google Earth. I typed my address (nearby) into Google Maps. At the bottom left corner of the map is a tiny image labeled “Earth”. Clicking on this causes everything to change from map view to photographic images. Then I clicked through the streets to find an optimal view of the house (and its address). The really exciting part is that it was possible to scroll back through time. By clicking on the text “Street View – Month 2015”, under the address box in the upper left hand corner, a timeline pops up. It allowed me to see the same street views in 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015. The beautification of this space is much more striking in comparison to where it started. The side yard has a newly added vegetable garden. Coming to Google Earth in 2016!!



My other favorite house has an incredible array of dwarf evergreen trees. These are the specimen plants that I admire at Atlantic Nursery but never buy, because they cost \$200 each. This front yard is like a show garden at the fair, where 50 different specimens are visible within 50 square feet. It is well designed with meandering paths and perfect pairings of red, green and yellow foliage. Amazingly, this has all been achieved since 2007, when the yard was a classic lawn.

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2009



2015



2007

Change Service Requested

VISUALIZING GARDENS WITH GOOGLE EARTH

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If you live in the city, your front yard is probably archived on Google Earth. My own house is visible, but I didn't want to show it off because I don't think we've improved the front yard (yet). If you live in the country you are probably still off the radar. Our members in Wake Forest weren't to be found on Google Earth's street view.

For now, you can see the gardens only from the street. I couldn't view the interior gardens at Fletcher Park, nor any backyards. But it was really fun to see the transformation of my neighborhood, and the front yard gardens that I admire the most!

MY FAVORITE PLANT IN JULY

– Laine Thomas

My favorite plant is July is hibiscus. We have two plants, one that produces 9" red flowers and another that produces 7" pink flowers. We purchased the pink one at Duke Gardens in the fall of last year, around late September. It was blooming at the time and it was one of the last impressive blooms we had before winter. So this year I was surprised when it bloomed in July. It was absolutely beautiful, but short-lived. Now that the flowers have all withered and fallen off, I've been wondering how to make it re-flower. There are plenty of opposing views regarding hibiscus care. Some say there is no benefit to deadheading or pinching off the old flowers. But



the consensus seems to be that a heavy pruning or deadheading will help the plant put more resources into another round of blooms. It is recommended to cut the plant back as much as one third to encourage branching. I will do that immediately, since my plants seem to send out only a few stems that grow very tall and then fall over. I have never pruned my perennials before, but this seems like a good place to start. In addition, hibiscus can be fertilized in the spring and summer to promote flowering. If I get it right, next year I will be able to re-use hibiscus for My Favorite Plant in July, August and September. Something for us all to look forward to!!