

# Springville Herbary

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I know, I know, my sign is still down for the winter and you don't know if we are still doing it. Surprise! We are! We didn't move to West Virginia! We will be open by the time you get this newsletter. Reading over my last newsletter, I found it kind of whiney and depressing. For shame! I will certainly do much better this time.

Do I really need my obligatory comment on the WEATHER? It has been so wet, I think I am starting to mold.

Watch out for GARLIC MUSTARD. We had a rather large patch back of the house. After identifying it with Picture This, (do you have it yet?) we pulled it all out. It is one of those weird non-native situations. In Europe, where it is native, herbivores eat it and people use it sparingly in salads. Over here, our herbivores generally don't eat it and if they do, it can be somewhat toxic. It is a fairly attractive plant about two feet tall with tiny white blooms and spicy smell when crushed.

We made a trip to WV two weeks ago. Coming back, (We drove there pretty much in the dark.) the REDBUDS were absolutely wonderful. Our lone redbud here is one of our favorite trees. They are native here, but a lot more native in WV, VA and MD. They also apparently self-sow more freely there than here. We are lucky to get one seedling a year.

CORRECTION: In September I wrote about Sara's Franklinia tree. While the information about that species was correct, the information about Sara's tree was not. Her new tree is a Stewartia. The blooms look like camellias, but bloom much later, in June. It is, at least, a member of the tea family, as is Franklinia.

We had a fine crop of SPRING PEEPERS this year. I was quite surprised to find that some of my Garden Club friends did not know that peepers are tiny tree frogs. I believe they thought peepers were birds or insects. They are extremely hard to spot, partly due to their size and partly because they can throw their voices. This was also a good year for the SPADEFoot TOADS. They need a wet year with seasonal ponds and puddles. The tadpoles mature into little toads very quickly, as short as two weeks time. They are amazingly loud, very raucous sounding. They bury themselves by digging backwards with a hard growth on their back feet. Thus the 'spadefoot' name. A full-grown spadefoot can be up to three inches with hind legs tucked.

Once again, our HELLEBORES look fabulous. They all get bigger every year and one of them has produced several babies. Even the squirrely one left last year got itself together and bloomed. I am one of those strange people who likes black flowers. My 'New York Nights' hellebore was great. Sadly, I was not able to get that variety again, but we have some other fine varieties, including a double called 'Rose Quartz'. Bring your mortgage.

Some of you who enjoy my writing style have been after me for years to WRITE A BOOK. Well, your nagging finally worked! I am well into a book, and I am pleased so far with the way it is going. It is not an autobiography, but a wild assortment of information and stories, like this newsletter. Longtime customers may recognize some of the material, but mostly not. If I find a publisher, (I don't want to self-publish.) it may be out by the next newsletter.

Our CHICKENS are finally laying again after taking a number of months off. The two younger hens from last year are still laying smaller eggs; perhaps that is all they are going to do. One is very cute, all black, even her beak, with a little topknot that shows some Silkie blood from our handsome rooster.

I am hoping to interest some of you in FEVERFEW. It is a perennial medicinal herb used as a migraine preventative. If, however, you are not a migraine sufferer, feverfew is an excellent filler for bouquets. It has a flowerhead with many tiny daisy-like flowers. To assure the best result as a filler, I have grown a variety called 'Snowball' which has fluffier blooms. Height is about 18 inches. Unlike chamomile, the ferny leaves are the medicinal part.

We will once again be vendors at the BURLINGTON COUNTY FARMERS MARKET. The last special spring market is April 27 from 10 AM to 1 PM. (Note shorter hours.) The first regular season market is May 11. If, for some strange reason, you have never

been to this market, what is holding you back? We have live music, all kinds of food including the produce, and many vendors with all sorts of wonderful hand-crafted stuff. Regular market hours are 8:30 AM to 1 PM. See you there!

Sadly, we did not get our POTATOES planted in a timely manner. I believe St. Patrick's Day is the traditional planting day. Also, I am not sure where to buy seed potatoes in this area. Anyone? My father always planted Kennabecs.

Do you need a robust shade ground cover? Let me sell you a native OSTRICH FERN. I believe I have covered this before, but we have sooo much of it. Big, beautiful and crazy invasive, it makes those brown feathery stems that the Garden Club members fight over at our wreath workshop. Want a good look at what it does? Look at the shade garden back of our house.

Speaking of my MOUNT LAUREL GARDEN CLUB, we meet at the Mount Laurel Community Center on the third Monday of the month. Food and socializing at 11 AM, business meeting at noon, program at 1 PM. Our next meeting is Monday, May 20. I will be doing a program on 'The Sensory Garden'. Guests are welcome, but be prepared to get some info about membership. We are a working club, with many projects in the Township and beyond

I really must get the MERLIN app on my phone that identifies bird calls. Only yesterday I was in the market and heard a bird behind the barn which I did not know. I have tried to be less OCD about identifying birds, butterflies, plants, bugs, but it is an uphill battle. After all, the app is free and we are members of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology which sponsors it.

We had no takers for our beautiful KITTENS, so they are all ours now. If someone knocked on the door and said "I must have a cat!" I am not sure who I could part with.

That last sentence ends in a PREPOSITION which always bothers me. I do see it being done in my beloved Wall Street Journal, so I guess it is just something I will have to get used to.

Unlike most years, our two big BAYS look pretty good. We seem to almost have the scale eliminated with olive oil spray, the supplemental heat for when the kittens were in that room and the extra water when giving the fish water all were helping factors. (Why are we giving the fish water? Because the cats love to drink out of his bowl. Extra flavor, you know.)

I know we are supposed to hate BARBERRIES because they are somewhat invasive and not native. We have a huge barberry which we very much like. It almost always has a bird's nest in its protective branches. The little red berries are attractive bird food. In the many years we have had it, I believe we have gotten three babies. We also have one with dark foliage which is blooming now and gorgeous!

For your butterflies, we have a really nice selection of PHLOX, several you might not find other places. Starfire has burgundy foliage and almost cherry-red blooms. Franz Schubert is lavender, Minnie Pearl is short and white with more finely cut foliage, woodland phlox prefers part shade where it can spread its pale blue flowers. All phlox is considered native, but woodland more so by native plant people.

For some reason, I seem to be unable to get BUTTERFLY BUSHES. I am going to attempt to grow some from cuttings of our very happy white bush. It gets huge blooms and, oddly, butterflies seem to prefer it over the others. I am not great at this, but desperate times call for desperate measures. I do, after all have a whole book called simply 'Buddlejas'. It's from the U.K, that's why the different spelling.

We have a new GRANDDOG! My son Mark (You remember Mark in WV.) adopted him from the shelter about a month ago. His name is Pete. He must be part basset; he is kind of long and low with bowed legs. He wasn't too sure yet about these new people in the house. It will happen.

My BEEBALM garden that I tried to establish last year became totally overrun with large weeds. I'm not sure anything is even left of the poor things. I suppose we can't expect every venture to be successful.

Oh, no! I have run dry of things to say! Perhaps I am dying. I must get this to the printer in the next half hour. Be assured we have what you need. We will not have basil for several more weeks because

**REMEMBER, OUR LAST SAFE FROST DATE IS MAY 15<sup>TH</sup>.**

Come see us here or at market.

**Ring the bell.**

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*If thou of fortune be bereft  
And in thy store there be but left  
Two loaves, sell one and with the dole  
Buy hyacinths to feed the soul.*