

Haddam Garden Club

January 2022 Garden Blog Article

by Terry Twigg



New Year's Reflections

It's New Year's Day, and I just wrote "2022" for the first time. A somber grey day, appropriate for reflecting on the year just ended and imagining the one newly under way.

Despite pandemic limitations, our club managed to be almost as active throughout 2021 as it had been in other years. We moved our meetings outdoors in the nicer weather; maintained our many town gardens, wearing masks when necessary; and continued our tradition of creating holiday decorations for town buildings, the greens, and all seven "Welcome to Haddam" signs. We managed the flowers and floral design sections of the Haddam Neck Fair, supervising intake and judging the entries. Some of us joined forces with two other clubs for a field trip to the Holiday Train Show at the New York Botanical Gardens. We had to cancel most fundraising activities, but focused our Town Tag Sale inventory on plants from our own gardens, and just about sold out! Planning ahead, many of our members cultivated dahlias to be sold at next May's sale. If you haven't grown these gorgeous flowers yet, you'll want to mark your calendar now. (And none of that "They're too much work" nonsense. Dahlias are easy to grow!)

New members are always welcome—a welcome that goes far beyond gardening. I joined as soon as I arrived in town, four years ago, and everyone made an effort to make me feel part of the group. We meet the second Monday of each month at 10:00 in the Community Center, so come see us, or check out our Facebook page and website, www.HaddamGardenClub.org.

Despite some setbacks, last year saw progress in my own gardens, particularly the hardscaping. A muddy front track was replaced by ninety-one feet of stone pathway, thirty feet of it put down by me before I conceded defeat (my neck is still in physical therapy; those stones are HEAVY) and turned it over to the impeccable craftsmanship of Steve Belz.

Steve also shaped massive chunks of stone into an epic flight of steps from the lawn to the courtyard. I have more plans, and plenty more rock, for the spring.

Best of all, after years of waiting disconsolately in the living room, my bronze fountain Raphael is finally in place. He hasn't quite settled in; naked cherubs were designed for warm Mediterranean climates, not New England winters, and he almost shivers in the snow.

The fountain adds so much winter interest to the courtyard, even though the water is turned off until spring. When we think of a garden we tend to think of its summer self, full of foliage and color, but January reminds us that we need to design for the rest of the year. I've written before in the [November 2020 Blog](#) about plants chosen for winter interest: those with evergreen leaves or colorful bark, striking shapes that come into their own once the leaves have fallen, berries that persist until the birds have exhausted other sources of food. Even before planting, though, the thoughtful gardener gives some thought to shape and structure. Gates and paths, arches and ponds, bird baths and sculptures all help to define your garden spaces and give you something to look at during the long months when everything living is dormant. I have a handsome stone retaining wall I forget about every summer and admire every winter as if seeing it for the first time. Walk around your yard tomorrow, and you'll see exactly where something extra would be most welcome.

New Year's resolution: As I ponder the pile of seed catalogs next to my chair, and debate how far I will give in to temptation, I resolve to do a much better job this year of keeping up with my garden journal. It's supposed to be purely practical, reminding me what I planted where, which variety of tomato I liked best, which plants germinated easily and which I'll never try to grow again. In Master Gardening class we were urged to write down every pest we encountered, the first bloom date, the prettiest colors and freshest flavors. I do, most of the time, remember to jot down the names of the more expensive trees and perennials, and where I bought them. But something unexpected has happened: my journal, intended only to chronicle horticultural events, carefully tends so many other memories.

Those dahlias—how my mother loves the orange ones! The catmint grown from seed, brought inside to woo newly-adopted cats. A road trip with a good friend that happened upon a garden sale: We filled my car; the trees are planted here, but the friend has returned to California. Snapdragons that became hospital bouquets; fancy mums that bloomed late enough to grace a Thanksgiving table; peonies that welcomed new babies and celebrated graduations. My life is written between the prosaic lines of my garden journal. Yours, too, will peek out from among the dry notations of dates and varieties and watering schedules.

Here's hoping 2022 will be our best year yet.