

Haddam Garden Club

August 2017 Garden Blog Article

by Cindy Tillson



Party by the River

Imagine a lovely Sunday afternoon in September by the Connecticut River, sipping wine, munching on sumptuous delights.

Our Party by the River will offer that and more—a relaxing afternoon with your friends and neighbors, surrounded by beautiful gardens, a lovely breeze (usually), and views. Did I mention gardens and view? We are having the party at the home of Elizabeth and Maurice Adams. Some of you may recall our event there last year on that very hot humid August day. Let those weather memories go.

We have pushed the party off a month to cooler September 17. We are keeping it more laid back so you can wander around and socialize while partaking of fine wine and appetizers. Seating will be available.

In preparation, we are trying out appetizer recipes to find the best ones. We are also tending our flowers, as we will need them to make our signature arrangements to grace the tables.

Reservations are required. Email lcooper13@comcast.net to secure yours. Adults only please. Tickets are \$30. The proceeds go toward scholarships, educational and informational programs, and materials to decorate the town for the summer and holiday seasons.

In our gardens, the hydrangeas are stunning. To keep them nice and blue, sprinkle your coffee grounds around them. It isn't an overnight remedy but works gradually, and gives you something to do with your coffee grounds. Drying them has always been hit or miss for me. I have read about several successful methods online, none of which I can personally vouch for. The common thread for all of them seems to be waiting until August or September when the blossoms are completely open and have become kind of papery.

Remove the spent blossoms on all of your flowering plants to keep the flowers coming. Feed the annuals too. If you want them to keep performing, they need nourishment. Don't feed perennials after August 15 though.

We have a plethora of fruit and vegetables in our gardens and at the many farmers' markets in the area now. Take advantage of this abundance and do some preserving. I have been using Pomona's Pectin to make jam for years now. You can make jam with as little sugar as you want (or other sweeteners) to gel. The color doesn't last for years as full sugared jam does, but the taste is still there. Jam tends to get eaten before the color goes anyway. The directions are in the package. Major supermarkets don't seem to carry Pomona's but health food stores do.

Pickles and relishes can be made with just about any vegetable or fruit. Chutneys are delicious pickled fruit preparations. There is always freezing and canning. Recipes abound online and in books.

The Butterfly Garden at the library is growing nicely and doing what it was designed to do. I have observed Monarch eggs as well as Spicebush Swallowtail eggs. An astute observer at my first talk spotted a teeny tiny Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillar. I have since found another. There are always butterflies flitting around for nectar. I have seen many bees and a few hummingbirds too, all valuable pollinators that we need to encourage. Go check it out. The library doesn't even have to be open! I will be there on August 16 at 3 to talk about what's happening in the butterfly garden and answer your questions. Everyone is invited to meet me at the garden.

To encourage the pollinators in your gardens, go easy on the pesticides and ONLY USE ORGANIC according to the instructions. Many pesticides kill all insects, not just the ones you consider pests. Hand picking can be effective too. Drop pests into a lidded container with soapy water in it. We can't afford to kill pollinators. Our planet needs them to provide our food. All real food production depends on pollinators in one way or another. Fruits and veggies are the most obvious. Animals that we eat depend on good grass, grain and corn to satisfy their food requirements. Pesticides are not something we want to eat (or for our food to eat). I am not telling you NOT to use these products but asking you to first consider if you *really* need to. If you do, please seek out the least toxic effective product you can find.

Update on the oak tree: The tree did not get planted in June as we had planned. We are hoping to plant it in July. If you see a new oak tree in back of the library, that's the one.

The Garden Club does not meet in August but will resume in September.