



The Express

Volume I Issue III

Fall 2004

Our Mission

The mission of the Olympus Garden Club is to promote and support the love of gardening, floral arranging, landscape design, horticulture, plant research and environmental improvement by providing education, resources, networking and leadership opportunities to our members and the community.

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Literacy Project Haiku

After telling or reading stories, I like to take listeners outdoors to discover natural features.

I think you can teach your children some basic and important ideas of haiku.

Haiku is the shortest poem in the world and it is usually much shorter than 17 English syllables. It is always something you actually see "in nature".

First, every student should pick something to draw that they saw on their visit outside.

Then he/she gives a word for the drawing.

- 1) a kitten
- 2) setting sun
- 3) a red dragonfly
- 4) a white lily

Next, he/she adds a few more words.

- 1) a kitten jumps
- 2) setting sun the red sky
- 3) a red dragonfly over the field
- 4) a white lily the breeze

Some beginners will reach the following level before long.

- 1) a kitten jumps at me
- 2) setting sun red all over
- 3) a red dragonfly flying

Urban Tree Pits Mini Gardens In The Rough

"I'm killing myself and zis is the last year of it", grumbled Jeanine, a diminutive native of France living on a busy downtown Brooklyn street. "I clean zis dog poop every day and zeez dog people completely disregard my signs."

Jeanine is a one woman show. Most of her domain of a dozen plus tree pits face a school yard whose administrators don't seem to have much regard for the trees or the careful plantings provided by Jeanine at her own expense. The flimsy wire tree guards that she also installed

around the pits to protect the plantings, also at her own expense, fail to keep her plantings safe.

Between the dog walkers, car doors and the school children's exuberance, the tree guards take a beating each year. Jeanine stoically bends back the wire fencing and has to replace them several times during the season.

Enter Olympus Garden Club and the Borough President's neighborhood beautification fund.

When the fund came to our attention, Jeanine's plight immediately came to mind. We filled out the application and under the auspices of our club, chances for getting strong iron tree guards look good.

When Jeanine learned about the application she was ecstatic. She knew that there was no absolute guarantee that we would get the guards, but the iron was in the fire so to speak. The car doors, doggies and school kids might now at last be held at bay.

R. Florin

over the field
4) a white lily sways in the breeze

The next stage is too difficult for your students who are first and second graders. It would be fantastic if they could write some haiku like the following in the future.

a playful kitten
jumping at its shadow
sunbeams through the leaves

setting sun
dyeing red
the autumn sky

a red dragonfly
flying around
over the rice paddy

a white lily swaying

veiled by a bamboo blind
the afternoon breeze

I hope you can encourage your young students to write their own haiku.

One haiku feature I'm attracted to is that haiku should be short enough for you to read it in one breath. Japanese 5-7-5 is much shorter than English 5-7-5.

As far as I know, every leading haiku writer in the USA has the same opinion as mine in this respect.

I'm looking forward to your comments.

C. L. Charles-King

President's Message

As we enter the autumn season, Olympus Garden Club members look back at many interesting and productive summer activities.

We participated in two "potting-up" workshops in cooperation with Ellen Kirby, director of Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Brooklyn GreenBridge. The first one in August began on a rainy note at a Washington Avenue street fair. Fortunately the weather improved enough for the workshop to proceed successfully. The second workshop, also with Brooklyn GreenBridge, took place on a sun drenched afternoon at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Harvest Fair.

At that event our members were tested, as we guided over 400 (mostly

very young people) in preparing their choice of potted pansies to take home.

Olympus lead a composting workshop at the David Foulke Memorial Garden and block party. We combined the workshop with a table of plants for sale.

Members and the public seemed to have fun, and the supply of plants was nearly sold out.

Finally, we enjoyed the sterling hospitality of our Executive Director, Solita Stephens and her family. Solita hosted a garden party at her Long Island home. The food, garden and company were truly memorable.

Robert Florin, President



One of the little people potting up pansies

New Member

We are proud to welcome our new member, Dr. Joyce Jed to Olympus Garden Club. We look forward to her adding her knowledge and experience to ours.

Featured Plant Amaranth

Botanical name: Amaranthus

Pronunciation: am-a-ran-thus

Common Name: Amaranth, Pigweed

Native to: Tropical/subtropical regions of the world

I must confess to having a love affair with the Amaranthus genus over the years. I have grown several of the species and my fascination with this plant group continues to grow. No matter the species, I stop to gape every time I encounter them. Tricolor Amaranth makes me want to dance with joy. I stand in awe of Elephant Head Amaranth. Reaching five feet tall, and so aptly named, with its rich burgundy flower head and beautiful fall color, it is majestic. Love-Lies-Bleeding Amaranth causes me to envision a horse's tail swishing gently in the wind.

I grew Elephant heads everywhere in the garden this summer, both in the ground and in containers and I have to

tell you I was beside myself with joy just looking at them.

In addition to my being crazy about them, they are high in protein, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, a source of dietary fiber, and they are easy to grow. Amaranthus means unfading or nonwithering. I guess I am learning to love wisely. Don't you agree?

Amaranths were a major food source for the Aztec civilization in Mexico 5000-7000 years ago but its use went out of fashion after colonizers realized that it was used in many religious ceremonies and soon prohibited its use. Thankfully, this attitude has changed and once again it is being recognized for its many benefits.

The National Academy of Science con-

siders this genus to be one of several plants that could be used to improve nutrition and quality of life in developing countries.

The leaves are used like leafy greens in many countries around the world and in soups and stews. The grain is made into flour and then used in cereals, pancakes, cookies, and noodles. You can find the greens at farmers markets and many of the grain products in health food stores.

No matter the species, I stop to gape every time I encounter them.




Elephant Head

Some might say it is weedy but the seedlings are easily removed. I say, here is a plant that someone can fall in love with and eat at the same time. I call that versatile. Try them. You just might like them.

S. Stephens

Olympus Garden Club Word Scramble

Basil	M	M	M	M	N	M	Y	M	M	M
Carrots	F	F	C	E	L	E	R	Y	N	G
Celery	F	H	G	D	R	X	A	L	B	T
Corn	Z	T	B	L	T	O	M	A	T	O
Melon	Z	C	A	V	B	P	E	Q	H	J
Peas	F	N	S	Q	U	A	S	H	X	V
Peppers	L	W	I	Z	Y	L	O	K	K	L
Rosemary	M	E	L	O	N	K	R	V	V	T
Sage	I	V	B	L	D	D	R	V	V	T
Squash	N	S	Q	L	D	K	C	C	D	R
	T	D	A	K	D	K	C	C	D	S
	D	J	W	G	Z	K	T	F	N	F
	C	J	S	A	E	P	T	P	L	C
	V	J	T	X	Z	E	T	H	L	C
	D	J	O	X	R	P	V	H	T	C
	C	O	R	N	V	P	N	W	T	V
R. Murray	K	R	R	T	N	E	K	B	T	T
see pg. 6	G	S	A	W	J	R	Z	X	T	B
	C	V	C	E	O	S	O	N	N	B

Know Your Soil's pH Value & Nutrients

Soil reaction or pH is a measure of the hydrogen ion activity in soil – solution. It is measured in pH units. The pH scale is logarithmic and covers a range from pH 0 – 14. pH 7 is neutral. pH 7 - 0 is increasingly acid, and pH 7 - 14 is increasingly alkaline.

A key to proper soil sampling is to be consistent. It is important to always analyze your soil at the same time of the year, since an area may give different values in the fall vs. the spring. Be more aware than concerned and keep pH records, since soils tend to acidify over time.

Soil fertility is directly influenced by pH through the solubility of many nutrients. At a pH lower than 5.5 many nutrients become very soluble

(Continued on page 6)

Tip Time

Stop fertilizing your trees, shrubs and perennials.

Start planting your spring blooming bulbs.

Apply your last and most important fertilizer to your lawn the week of Thanksgiving.

Cut back perennials and clean up the garden. Discard all diseased material.

Dig up your caladiums, elephant ears, caladiums, gladioli, cannas and dahlias before the first frost.

Be sure to give all of your plants a good drink of water before the ground freezes.

Stop deadheading and divide overgrown perennials

You still have time to plant some leafy vegetables. Put them in now.

Extend your season by protecting your

fall crop with cold frames

Prune all dead or diseased limbs from your trees and shrubs and mark the limbs for removal in the spring with tape now so that you will remember.

Test the pH of your soil before you add lime..

Clean and oil your tools and equipment before storing for the winter.

Save your fall leaves for the compost pile or shred and use as winter mulch.

Drain all of your pipes and hoses to prevent freezing.

Cover crops control soil erosion and add nutrients to the soil. Plant some now. Make food and water available for wildlife.

Save seeds and take cuttings for next years garden.

Your houseplants should be back from their summer vacation. Check them again for pests & disease and clean where necessary.

Spread mulch to protect your plants from the winter.

Say no to mulch mountains around your trees. Roses need them for winter protection. Trees do not.

Spray newly planted trees, shrubs, roses and evergreens with an anti-desiccant to help reduce moisture loss from winter winds



Say no to mulch mountains around your trees.

Soil Compaction

When we first found oil, we called it “black gold”. In reality, we made a typo, for SOIL is truly black gold and the need to revere it for the incredible organism that it is, is just coming back into vogue.

As gardeners, everything we do affects the well-being of this treasured resource. Express Newsletter always has some great tips and reminders that benefit soil, e.g. testing your soil for nutrients and pH, so I thought I might add a few more with a focus on compaction.

Soil compaction occurs when the soil particles get pressed together, eliminating the pore space between the particles. What does that mean to gardeners?

- Restricts the ability of water, nutrients and air to enter or “infiltrate” the soil. Roots cannot exist in soil deprived of these ingredients.
- Decreases pore size, the end result of which is lower soil temperature. Lower soil temperature affects the activity of soil organisms, decreasing the rate of decomposition of organic matter and, thus, available nutrients for roots.
- Restricts the ability of roots to penetrate the soil. Roots depend on continuous pore spaces to optimize their growth. Compaction disconnects the spaces, sometimes causing a crust to form on the soil surface, further sealing the pores. If water cannot infiltrate, that increases run off and, potentially soil erosion.

Most compaction that occurs in our gardens is caused by our actions. While most of us are not driving heavy construction equipment over our gardening area and while the degree of compaction is mitigated by the soil texture - how much sand, how much clay and, most importantly, what’s the organic content - we are still instigating compaction.

- Working in the garden when the soil is wet quickly destroys the aggregates that form the soil’s structure, which also means that we are destroying the pore spaces between and within the aggregates.
- Walking on soil that does not have a good organic litter layer causes compaction at the point of contact. Remember that our feet have a relatively small surface area compared to our weight.
- Many gardens are a combination of arrangements of plants and bare soil. In nature, soil is never bare. Even weather events, e.g. rainfall, cause compaction and depletion.
- Gardens that are adjacent to roadways that are traveled frequently by buses and trucks will, because of the vibration, suffer compaction in the B horizon, which is a more persistent problem. Since nutrient capacities and continuous pore space are dependent on soil organisms moving minerals from B plus organic matter from the litter layer into and through the A horizon, having a compacted B hori-

zon can reduce available nutrients. In addition, the compaction in B causes a perched water table. Constant saturation of A can cause a loss of soil and ponding on the soil surface.

Perched water tables have another point of origin. Adding soil to a garden, for whatever reason, without blending 2 inches of the existing soil edge with 2 inches of the new soil will cause a perched water table to form leading to extended periods of saturation. End result - compaction.

Now that we have explored this nemesis, how do we eliminate the problem and prevent it from reoccurring.

- Use a pitch fork to aerate compacted soil by punching holes into the soil. Place 2 inches of finished compost over the soil to be aerated and punch the pitch fork tines straight into the soil, working the compost into the soil as you proceed. Professionally, this can be accomplished with a coring machine. If you have trees or shrubs, be mindful of large surface roots. Plan your aeration strategy first before initiating.
- Avoid working with soil when it is wet. If you are running an irrigation system, make sure you turn off the program a good 24 hours in advance of your planned work. If it has rained, also wait at least 24 hours before proceeding.
- Mulch, mulch, mulch! Healthy soil means supporting the soil food web. That means maintaining an organic litter layer as a food source for the web. While most of us don’t live in a forest where this occurs as part of the natural process, we can create the litter layer by applying an organic mulch to unplanted soil.
 - If you grow vegetables, try using the square foot raised bed strategy to reduce the amount of exposed soil within the planting area. Then, cover your working paths with a good organic mulch, such as shredded pine bark or the residue of your harvest.
 - Once you have harvested your crop(s), plant a cover crop, such as winter rye, to hold the soil and, prior to spring planting, cut the growth and turn it into the soil as a green manure.
 - If your garden has trees, shrubs, perennials or annuals, don’t forget to maintain a good organic mulch cover, 2 - 3 inches deep, in all of the planting beds, making certain to keep the mulch at least 3 to 6 inches away from any woody stem(s).
 - Using leaf litter as a mulch should be restricted to leaves that have no pests or diseases. We also should be mindful that most of our back yard compost piles do not get hot enough to kill any fungal or bacterial diseases. Therefore, do not add diseased leaves to the pile.

Compaction does not happen over night and neither does the solution. Over time, maintaining an organic litter layer will help restore and improve your soil’s structure. And, think of all those happy soil critters. N. Zurcher

OLYMPUS GARDEN CLUB

Membership Application

Hello,

Are you a gardener?

Do you have a love for plants?

Do you want to learn about gardening?

Would you like to be able to share your gardening triumphs and desolation with a group of fellow enthusiasts?

Do you want to participate in our efforts to improve our neighborhoods?

Would you like to help us create programs to enhance the lives of seniors, young adults and children?

IF YOUR ANSWER IS YES TO ANY/ALL OF THE ABOVE QUESTIONS, THEN PLEASE, BECOME A MEMBER.

MEMBERS ARE REQUIRED TO HELP US WITH OUR COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH AND TO PAY ANNUAL DUES.

Our membership dues are \$30.00 annually for adults and \$5.00 for youth. We have many activities scheduled throughout the year.

We are anxious to have you join us and welcome your participation.

Membership benefits include monthly educational gardening lectures, state, district and club newsletters, garden tours and personal enrichment.

Please see our attached Fact Sheet.

Fill out the application below and mail with your dues or bring it with you to our next meeting.

Application for Membership

New Member Youth Member Membership Renewal

President
Robert Florin
Garden Volunteer
Horticulturist,
Community Gardener

Vice-President
Cecile Charles-King
Master Composter, BQLT board
member, Community Gardener

Treasurer
Johanna Willins
Co-Founder
Master Composter, President of
Herbal Community Garden

Executive Director
Solita Stephens
Founder
Horticulturist, Master Composter,
Educator/Lecturer

QUESTION S:
info@olympusgardendub.org

WEBSITE:
<http://www.olympusgardenclub.org>

Dues: \$30.00 Annually

Last name		First name	
Address			
City		State	Zip + four code
Home Telephone Number		Work Telephone Number	
Fax Telephone Number		Cell Telephone Number	
E-Mail Address		Best Time To Call <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	
INTERESTS/SPECIALTY		Mail Completed Application and Annual Dues of \$30.00	
		Solita Stephens Post Office Box 531 Uniondale, NY 11553	
		Make Checks Payable To Olympus Garden Club	

(Know your soil continued from page 3)

and are easily leached from the soil. At high pH, nutrients become insoluble and plants cannot readily extract them. Maximum soil fertility occurs in the range 6.0 to 7.2.

To have a soil analysis done you need to collect ten to fifteen cores, from all areas within a section, and combine them as one composite sample. Be sure to sample your vegetable, flower, lawn, or tree/shrub sections separately because they may require different pH levels. Collecting can be done by vertically skimming the soil from the surface down to the depth of the plant's root system. The core depth depends on the root system. For example, an eight inch core depth for vegetable and flower gardens, a three inch core depth for lawns, and a fifteen inch core depth for trees. Remember to use a clean plastic bucket and garden trowel, so that you do not contaminate the soil sample. This test provides:

- The soil pH values
- The current soil levels of nutrients
- Fertilizer and lime recommendation for the plants you are growing, if needed.

We recommend that you contact us at info@olympusgardenclub.org if you would like to purchase a soil pH test kit recommended by Cornell Cooperative Extension. Contact Cornell Cooperative Extension listed in your phone-

book under United States Government Offices-Agriculture department to obtain instructions for a complete soil analysis.

Nutrients in the Soil and their Es-sences to Plant Development.

Macronutrients –

Nitrogen - rapid growth, dark green color, increases yield of leaf, fruit or seed, increases protein in food, feeds soil microorganisms.

Phosphorus - early root formation and growth, aids in blooming and plant development; important to seed germination

Potassium - stalk development, formation and transfer of starches, sugars, and oils, promotes enlargement of roots and tubers.

Calcium - influences intake of other plant foods, promotes early root formation and growth.

Sulfur - maintains dark green color, encourages plant growth.

Magnesium - essential part of chlorophyll, necessary for the formation of sugar, regulates plant food absorption.

Micro nutrients:

Iron , Manganese, Copper, Zinc, Boron, Molybdenum, Chlorine, Cobalt.

Plants require these elements in small amounts but they are just as important as macro nutrients.

S. Crippen

Reuse Recycle

Over the summer Olympus Garden Club found the perfect opportunity to serve as intermediary between two Brooklyn Queens Land Trust community gardens.

The David Foulke Memorial Community Garden had some old excavated red brick that they needed to discard. The Ralph Lincoln Service Center Community Garden needed brick for a path or edging. Olympus Garden Club moved the bricks between the two gardens as part of our commitment to improvement, beautification and conservation. Hurray!

Olympus Garden Club
 P.O. Box 531
 Uniondale, NY 11553

Word Scramble Answer

M F F N Z F L M N N N D C V O O K
 H F T C N W B E U L A B O G M
 H E E L L O N L L K K K K K K K
 N E R B B Y E D D D D D D D D
 H E X P P L L K K C C C C C C C
 M L L A O H K V V C C F P H W B X N
 M N B E H X K V V D D N L T T T N
 M O O T O J V L T T R S F C C V T B

Our Monthly Meeting Schedule

November 11, 2004
 Substitute Plants for the Asian Long-horned Beetle

December 9, 2004
 Group Activity - Friendship Pot-pourri. Bring your favorite all natural fragrant potpourri ingredient.

Please check our website calendar for last minute changes.

Website: <http://www.olympusgardenclub.org>
 Contact us: info@olympusgardenclub.org

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