

GARDENING FOR HUMMINGBIRDS



Photo source – Wikipedia (Female feeding on *Monarda didyma*)

IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES, the ruby throated hummingbird is our only regular visitor. The adult male has an iridescent ruby red throat patch (which can appear dark to black from some viewing angles and in some lighting) and a dark forked tail. The female has a dark rounded tail with white corners and no throat patch. In my personal experience, for some reason females are far more common in my Springfield back yard. The ruby throated hummingbird is migratory, spending the winter in southern Mexico and Central America. It breeds throughout the eastern United States and Canada in mixed deciduous forest, nesting in downward sloping tree limbs 10–20 feet up.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are solitary and territorial. Adults typically only come into contact for mating. Both males and females of any age aggressively defend feeding locations within their territory, making it uncommon for multiple birds to be feeding from the same flower patch or feeder. They become especially aggressive in late summer to early fall as they fatten up for migration. For this reason, multiple spot feeders do not tend to attract more than one ruby throat at a time.

The key to gardening for the ruby throated hummingbird is to understand its feeding habits and provide food

sources at the right time and in multiple locations. Nectar from flowers and flowering trees is its main food, but its diet also occasionally includes insects and tree sap taken from woodpecker drilling. It shows a strong preference for the color red and slight preference for tubular flowers as a nectar source. The birds feed from flowers using a long extendable tongue and usually catch insects on the wing. Young birds are fed insects for protein since nectar is an insufficient source of protein for the growing birds. The ruby throated hummingbird also readily calls on nectar feeders, especially early in the season before many flowers are in bloom and in late summer and early fall before migration.

Because the ruby throated hummingbird is solitary and highly territorial, attracting multiple birds to your garden will depend upon placement of multiple, widely separated food sources. Several patches of flowers or several smaller nectar feeders have proven to be more successful than mass plantings or one single large feeder in my garden. Some annual nectar sources that have been successful in my garden include *Cupheas*, *Nasturtiums* and *Ipomeas*. Perennial nectar choices may include *Campsis radicans*, *Bignonia capreolata*, *Monarda didyma* and *Phlox paniculata*. Because these birds also feed on small insects, especially while rearing young, I find that they pluck small flies from mint and similar small flowers which seem to always be covered with masses of small flying pollinators.

Enjoying the ruby throated hummingbird in your garden is fun and easy. Try placing a feeder near your deck or patio, where they will approach, cautiously at first, then more boldly with time, to hover and alight so closely you can hear their wing beats, even while you sit quietly and sip a cup of tea in the morning. It's well worth the effort! ☘

Dave Lear

Manager's Message



Got Plants? We've Got Answers

WHO ARE YOU GONNA ASK? As you get out into the garden, tons of questions come to mind. Sure, you can quickly type some key words into a search engine, but sometimes you just want to talk to a real person. At Green Spring Gardens, we provide that person to person contact to help you with your questions.

Every day we have a staff person assigned as Gardener on Duty. You can bring a photo or plant sample in a plastic bag to the front desk. If the Gardener is out and about and not able to come to the front desk, our front desk staff can take some notes for the Gardener to get back to you.

Every Saturday from 12:30–3:30 pm through September, our Green Spring Master Gardeners will have a tent set up in front of the Horticulture Center. The master gardeners are specially trained to help answer your questions. Bring your questions, with photos or plant samples, and sit down for a moment to talk.

Sometimes heading over to Green Spring Gardens does not work for you. Here are some other options. You are always welcome to send me an email with your question, along with a photo if you wish. If I can't answer your question, there are several gardeners on staff who can help, too. My email address is mary.oliem@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Our master gardeners help staff the Horticulture Helpline at the Virginia Cooperative Extension office.

You can phone 703-324-8556 to leave a detailed message for someone to return your call. The master gardeners also staff information booths at our Farmers Markets. Visit the Farmers Market home page for the locations and schedule at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/wp-farm-mkt.htm>.

Here are some tips for bringing real or photographic samples to us. If you need plant identification help, try to get a sample that includes the flowers and a few leaves still on the stem. If you take a photo, also try to capture the flowers and leaves. If you can show the whole plant, that can be helpful for us also.

If you need help diagnosing a disease or insect problem, try to get a sample from both a healthy and an affected plant or plant part. Place any diseased plant parts or insects in a sealed plastic bag. You don't want to inadvertently spread pests around. We may be able to send to Adria Bordas, our Extension agent, plant problems that we cannot identify. Samples must be fresh, so keep them refrigerated with a damp paper towel in the bag until you can bring them within a day or two.

Whether you ask a staff member or master gardener volunteer, we love plant question challenges. Bring your samples and come talk to us! 🌱

Mary Olien
Park Manager



Gardenline

MANAGER:

Mary Olien

EDITORS:

Sunny Greene, Susan Voss

DESIGN AND LAYOUT:

Don Christian

Contributions? Comments?
The editorial staff would like to hear from you.

Please contact us through

Gardenline
Green Spring Gardens
4603 Green Spring Rd.
Alexandria, VA 22312

703-642-5173

TTY: 703-803-3351

Gardenline is a newsletter published jointly by Green Spring Gardens and Friends of Green Spring (FROGS). Green Spring Gardens is administered by the Fairfax County Park Authority's Resource Management Division. For more information, call the park at

703-642-5173

or write:

Green Spring Gardens
4603 Green Spring Road
Alexandria, VA 22312
TTY: 703-803-3351

A publication of
Fairfax County, VA



If accommodations or alternative formats are needed, please call 703-324-8563 at least 10 working days before the event.



FROGS Talk

Susan Voss, FROGS President

DESPITE A LATE START, the gardening season began with a successful Garden Gate Plant Shop opening on April 5th with over \$4,500 in sales - the best opening ever. The Plant Shop is an important source of revenue for FROGS, representing over 25% of our budget. Thanks to FROGS funding and Frank Jankauskas' work, there is new fencing in the back and refurbished benches. Under horticulturist Judy Zatsick's supervision, the shop has a large selection of plants for your garden. With your FROGS discount, shopping here is a win-win situation for all.

At the FROGS March board meeting, representatives of the Park

Authority presented a proposed budget for Phase II of the gazebo of \$96,000. With the generous support of over \$21,000 from our 2013 annual appeal combined with a Mastenbrook grant of \$20,000, County expenditure of \$10,000, and the previously approved \$60,000 from FROGS, we hope to begin construction this summer.

In April, the Garden Club of Virginia completed the long awaited planting of the Beatrix Farrand garden behind the Historic House. It is now blooming with plants that are representative of her gardens.

Mark your calendars for the Summer Concert on Wednesday, June

25 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. With the popular Andrew Acosta and the new Old-Time String Band performing, and cake and lemonade provided by FROGS, it promises to be a perfect way to spend a summer evening.

With Spring Garden Day behind us, it is not too early to begin thinking about Fall Garden Day on September 13th. In addition to the vendors and bake sale, the Silent Auction will again be featured. As noted in the article on page 4, we are asking FROGS members to assist in donating items for this important fund raising event. ☼



FAMILY PUPPET SHOW



and more for children at Green Spring

The Blue Sky Puppet Theater will perform "If Pigs Could Fly" at Green Spring Gardens on Wednesday, July 30, at 10:30 am. Tickets are \$3.00 per person and reservations can be made at the Green Spring Information Desk or online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring/ "Summer Reading Puppet Show." The "flying pigs" will share stories from four parts of the world as they also demonstrate that reading is fun. This program is geared to preschool and elementary children but all ages are welcome.

FROGS sponsors this puppet program in celebration of Green Spring's participation in the Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) summer reading program. Children who complete their reading logs, available from all branches of FCPL, can redeem a coupon for a gift from Green Spring.

When visiting Green Spring Gardens with children, be sure to stop in at the Horticulture Library and enjoy our children's corner, filled with stories about gardens and the outdoors! ☼

**Bloomin' Bucks with
Brent and Becky's Bulbs
Continues**

Brent and Becky's Bulbs in Gloucester, Virginia, is continuing the FROGS fundraising program. Order bulbs, or anything else from Brent and Becky's Bulbs, and they will donate 25% of the payment to FROGS.

Simply log on to bloominbucks.com, click on the drop-down box, scroll down to select Friends of Green Spring Gardens and then enter the online catalog. You'll get a superb selection of garden items and help support Green Spring Gardens at the same time.

"Gilded Age" was Golden

GREEN SPRING'S second annual history symposium – "Victorian America: Glimpses into a Gilded Age" – earned high praise from attendees. The full-day event on March 8th engaged the audience with a varied format of lectures and exhibits, capped off by a rousing, funny, and irreverent performance by "Mark Twain!"

One guest commented: "The time went by so quickly!" We couldn't ask for a better compliment. Another noted: "Wonderful experience. I'll be back for the next one." Echoing that sentiment, many provided us with valuable suggestions for future symposia. Visitor feedback and input is vital for us to improve and excel at creating top quality programs. Please keep the golden ideas coming. ☼

Debbie Waugh, Historic House Coordinator



Mark Twain (Ryan Clemens) and John Philip Sousa (Ron Anzalone) hit it off!

Photo by Kathy Trichei; all rights reserved



Photo by Kathy Trichei; all rights reserved

Ryan Clemens of Virginia Stage Company portrays his ancestor Samuel Langhorne Clemens, aka Mark Twain.

WANTED Items for the SILENT AUCTION at FROGS' Fall Garden Day Sept. 13, 2014

The Silent Auction is a special feature at our Fall Garden Day fundraising event. We encourage all FROGS members to help us by donating goods and services for this once-a-year auction. Examples of bestselling auction items:

Getaways and Outings: *Think ESCAPE!*

- ☼ A long weekend at your vacation home or favorite getaway spot
- ☼ Sailing excursions
- ☼ Hot air balloon rides

Wines and Gourmet Items:
Think DELICIOUS!

- ☼ Catered dinners
- ☼ Group dinners
- ☼ Wine tastings
- ☼ Vineyard tours
- ☼ Gift certificates
- ☼ Gift baskets

Sports and Entertainment:
Think FUN!

- ☼ Tickets to: theatre, concerts, sporting events

Underused Treasures: *Think REGIFTING!*

- ☼ This list is too long to mention, but you know what we mean.

Contact any one of the following people to arrange item pickup, storage, or to volunteer to help acquire auction items:

Eileen Rollyson
at danpearl@verizon.net OR
703-573-8822

Ivy Sinaiko
at asinaiko@cox.net OR
703-256-6031

Clint Fields
at cfields232@verizon.net OR
703-425-1610

Thank you for your support!

Clint Fields, Volunteer Extraordinaire

In November 2013 the Fairfax County Park Authority bestowed a “Volunteer of the Year” award to Green Spring Gardens volunteer Clint Fields. There has not been a more deserving recipient.

Clint has been a volunteer at Green Spring since 2002, when he first spied Green Spring Gardens after donating goods to the Salvation Army next door. He immediately decided he “had to learn more about this beautiful place” and soon was volunteering for horticulturist Brenda Skarphol. Since then Clint’s commitment to Green Spring volunteering has been nothing short of amazing.

After becoming a Green Spring Master Gardener in 2004, Clint began his continuing involvement in Children’s Education. “I love kids, I really do,” Clint says. When asked why he wanted to teach children he responded, “Although I was a pretty good biology student in high school and college, it was not until I became a master gardener that I was able to tie together how the interdependence of plants and animals really works. It’s exciting for me to pass this on to kids in a meaningful and fun way.” Clint says he does this in the “Food Chain” and “Predator

and Prey” classes he teaches to first through fourth graders. He goes on to say, “The most rewarding thing in working with kids is to watch the ‘lights go on’ when they begin to understand how life on our planet works.” Clint adds, “The Children’s Education program at Green Spring Gardens is fortunate to have staff members and a corps of great volunteer teachers, many of whom are retired educators, who believe in making learning fun.”

Clint is a retired Army colonel. When asked what got him interested in volunteering, Clint said that volunteering is a big part of Army life. People in military communities share their time and talents in taking care of each other. After Army retirement Clint served as executive director of Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ). Next time you visit the Zoo, look for the Clint Fields Conservation Plaza named in his honor and in appreciation for his outstanding service. Clint notes that his “experiences at FONZ taught him that, based on their everyday experiences, volunteers can do anything, and from a managerial perspective, they can really help expand any enterprise.”

Clint continues to demonstrate his philosophy regularly at Green Spring 3-4 days a week. He is also past president (and current vice-president) of the Friends of Green Spring (FROGS) and notes that one of his “greatest thrills” was teaching in the recently finished classroom space, the construction of which was made possible by FROGS donations.

Congratulations on your latest award, Clint. We salute you!

PS. NEWS FLASH! Clint has just been named as one of three Cox Communications Heroes finalists. This is an awards program honoring those who “work to create preserve or enhance the shared outdoor places in our communities.” You will be able to vote for Clint beginning in late May through mid-June. Check www.coxconservesheroes.com for more details. 🌸

Sunny Greene

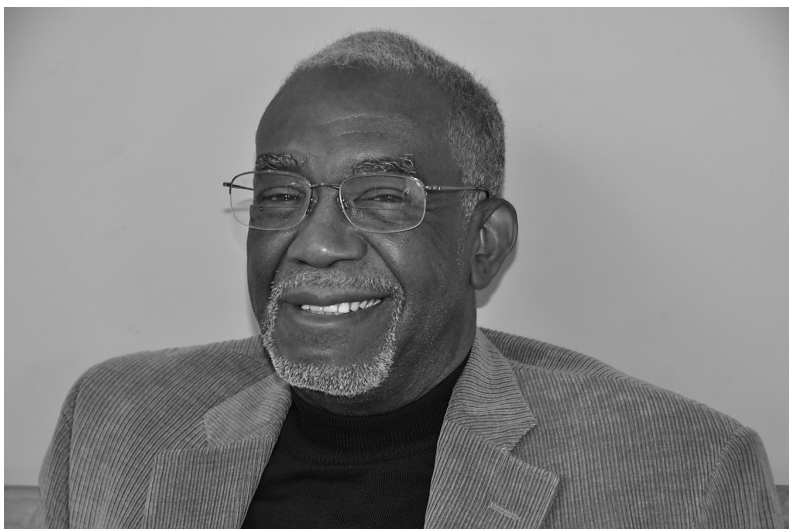


Photo by Kathy Trichel; all rights reserved

ART SHOWS NOT TO BE MISSED

Now through June 29: The fabulous talents of the Potomac Valley Watercolorists are on display throughout both the Horticulture Center and the Historic House.

From June 30-August 25 don’t miss the talents of oil painter Penny McGrath throughout the Horticulture Center and those of oil painter Elizabeth Floyd throughout the Historic House. Reception for both artists: July 6, 1:00 to 3:00 pm.

Beginning August 26 and ending October 28 enjoy the splendid mixed media displays of the Springfield Art Guild throughout both the Horticulture Center and the Historic House. Reception: Sept. 7, 1:00 to 3:00 pm.

First Woman to Save the Historic House

By 1931 Green Spring Farm and the Historic House had changed hands several times. The property had been divided and much of it sold off. The house, empty for a long while, had fallen into ruins, and the surrounding shrubs were completely overgrown. In 1931 the owners were Frederick and Caroline Segesserman, who lived in Burke and purchased the property initially for investment purposes. The Segessermans did take steps to protect the home from further vandalism including putting the mantles into safe storage.

In 1931 Minnie Whitesell, a 65 year old widow living in Illinois, purchased Green Spring Farm for herself and two adult children working in DC. She hired an architect, a Mr. Wiley, who said the house could be salvaged. Mr. Wiley hired a carpenter, Mr. Pence, to start work on the house.

Mary Margaret Pence, a lifelong resident of Lincolnia, provided us with her husband's history of having worked for Minnie Whitesell as her handyman. He cut the lawns along with many miscellaneous chores. He went to Haymarket with a crew to tear down an older home and salvage some of the floorboards that were laid over the cobblestone floor in the room now named the Michael and Belinda Straight room, although at that time this room was used as the kitchen.

Minnie continued to make improvements to the house while she rented out most of the land for farming purposes. The house originally had an outside privy. Minnie hired plumbers to install the first indoor bathroom in the house, on the second floor.

A log house was purchased and Mr. Pence helped moved the cabin to the property by taking it apart and rebuilding it by placing new mortar between the logs. It was used for storage and later as a guest house.



Historic House when purchased by Minnie Whitesell c. 1931
File photo – Historic Green Spring

He also remembered Minnie Whitesell having both a vegetable and flower garden behind the house.

Once the house was again made livable, her two local children moved into the house with Minnie. They convinced her to build a garage close to the house, (behind the kitchen) so that they had shelter for their automobiles.

Minnie 's husband was a farmer so she grew to love working the land and did much of the trimming of the overgrown Osage orange hedge, once again allowing visitors and passers-by to see the future landmark being renovated for occupancy. She also brought in boxwood from southwestern Virginia and placed them on her property knowing they would do well since boxwoods had been planted on the property for selling during the 1920's when Frederick Segesserman owned the farm. Many of these boxwoods still exist, having been transplanted in a semi-circle behind

the Historic House under the supervision of Beatrix Farrand in the 1940's.

In addition, though we haven't found an exact date for when electricity was installed at Green Spring, we do have a photo (on view in the Historic House gift shop) showing a single electric light bulb hanging from the ceiling during Minnie Whitesell's ownership, so are assuming she made this addition as well. Minnie Whitesell lived at Green Spring for about eight years and made many strides in restoring, preserving and modernizing the Historic House, much to our delight. On June 11, 1938, Minnie was discovered

dead in an upstairs area of her home. Her children subsequently sold Green Spring Farm to Michael and Belinda Straight. ☹️

Dotty Stahl

Chair, Historic Site Committee



FROGS USED BOOK SALE IN NEW LOCATION

The FROGS used book sale has been moved to the corner just outside the library doors. Stop by for bargain prices on a range of garden books from practical manuals to beautiful coffee table books. Funds from the book sale support purchases for the Horticulture Library as well as special events like the annual summer puppet show. Your donations of gently used garden books and magazines are greatly appreciated.



THE GARDEN GATE PLANT SHOP is open and in full swing! We have plenty of wonderful plants that will make great additions to your gardens. Come check them out today.

Our shrubs look great this year and are just waiting to find their way into your yard. We have *Abelia grandiflora*, ‘Sunny Anniversary’, with yellow blooms tinted with pink and orange. For you dark foliage lovers, you might consider *Sambucas nigra* ‘Eva’ Black Lace and *Weigela florida* ‘Spilled Wine’. Simply stunning! We also have *Clethra alniflora* ‘Vanilla Spice’, with its showy white flowers. *Clethra*, or summersweet, is a deer-resistant native shrub that will attract butterflies and hummingbirds to your gardens and will bloom nicely in shade. A variety of hydrangeas, camellias, and roses are also available.

For those of you with shade, we have a variety of ferns for your woodland gardens, including Cinnamon fern, Ostrich fern, Marginal Wood fern, and Christmas fern. We also have *Polygonatum biflorum*, or Solomon’s Seal, a wonderful native that will delight you with its sweeping arches. We have a nice variety of *Heucheras* as well, with colors of light caramel to near black! New this year to our shop is *Polemonium reptans* ‘Stairway to Heaven’, an outstanding and colorful native cultivar sporting green leaves with white leaf margins tinged with pink. Lovely.

For your sunny spots, we have some great perennials that will give your gardens true splashes of color. We have the wonderful *Lonicera sempervirens* ‘John Clayton’, a yellow flowered trumpet honeysuckle that is perfect for trellises and arbors. Plus, pick your color of phlox this year! Choose ‘Emerald Blue’, ‘Candy Stripe’, or ‘Sherwood Purple’, we have them all! Other sun loving perennials in the shop include *Liatris microcephala*, *Liatris spicata* ‘Kobold’, *Monarda* ‘Raspberry Wine’, *Tradescantia* ‘Concord Grape’ and ‘Sweet Kate’. Our goldenrods this year, including *Solidago rugosa* ‘Fireworks’ and *Soli-*

dago sphacelata ‘Golden Fleece’, will definitely bring the pollinators to your gardens.

This is just a few of the plants we have in the shop at the moment. We will continue to have our organic herbs for your cooking pleasure, but please hurry! They are going fast! Our staff will be on hand to assist you with any questions you might have. After the long winter we have had, happy planting!

The Garden Gate Plant Shop is open 9:00-4:00 Monday-Saturday: 12:00-4:00 Sunday. ☼

Judy Zatsick
Propagation Horticulturist

Children’s Education

Spring has passed in a blur of school field trips, birthday parties, and scout programs. Two programs, however, have left a lasting impression.

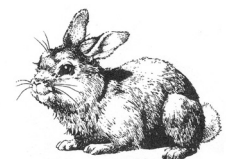
Our second Children’s Cherry Blossom Celebration, held on April 5th, painted the gardens with color just as our spring bulbs were beginning to bloom. Hand-painted lanterns swung merrily from our gazebo, a chorus of children from Fox Mill Elementary dressed in brilliant blue Happi coats outsang the martins and bluebirds, and a Japanese military officer and his family sporting origami Samurai helmets greeted visitors in Japanese and demonstrated calligraphy and origami. We anticipate that next year’s event will bring even more participants.

The second program was remarkable because it was the first multi-session children’s gardening program to be offered in several years. “Let’s Grow Garden Club” brings children and parents to our classroom and Children’s Discovery Garden every two weeks to dig in the soil and learn about plants.

This program is held on Monday mornings from 10:30 to 12:00 and will continue throughout the summer and into fall. With “Let’s Grow Garden Club,” our plan is to develop a format that works for young families’ schedules and encourages longer-term participation in gardening. The first session drew four children and their parents. We hope that “Let’s Grow” members will multiply, inspiring children and parents alike to garden and discover nature. A goal with all our programming is to build a corps of new families that will support Green Spring Gardens and its mission in the coming years.



Ann DiFiore
Children’s Program Specialist





Gardenline

Green Spring Gardens • 4603 Green Spring Road • Alexandria, VA 22312



Concert in the Garden

Wednesday, June 25
6:30-8pm

Enjoy a summer evening at Green Spring Gardens relaxing to live music

- Andrew Acosta and the new Old-Time String Band
 - Bring a picnic dinner to enjoy on the lawn
- The Friends of Green Spring (FROGS) will be serving complimentary cake and lemonade
 - FREE