

**TRUMPET**



**VINE**

**National Garden Clubs, Inc.  
Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania – District VII**

*October-December, 2019*



*Jackie Stempfer, Editor*



**“MY GOAL WAS TO LOSE 10 POUNDS THIS YEAR  
I ONLY HAVE 20 MORE TO GO”**



Greensburg Garden Center's ANNUAL MEETING - Greensburg Country Club  
Tuesday, October 1, 2019 "The Magic of Fall Planted Bulbs" by Doug Oster

Well known Pittsburgh gardener Doug Oster will be our guest speaker at our  
Annual Meeting presentation at Greensburg Country Club.

Doug Oster is manager and editor of Everybody Gardens with a passion of  
gardening and a love of sharing his experiences with other gardeners. You will  
also find Doug's gardening contributions in the Tribune-Review each week.

He's an Emmy Award winning producer, television host and writer. His  
Outstanding Documentary Emmy was awarded for "Gardens of America", a one  
hour special he conceived for the PBS affiliate WQED. Oster is co-host of The  
Organic Gardeners Radio Show every Sunday morning at 7:00 AM on KDKA  
radio in Pittsburgh. He also appears every Thursday morning on KDKA-TV's

Pittsburgh Today Live at 9:00 AM. “Gardening is fun,” he says. “Enjoy every day spent tending vegetables, flowers, shrubs and trees.”

Doug will have copies of his book *Steel City Gardens* available to purchase. Don't miss the chance to have your book signed personally.

Purchase tickets for unique raffle prizes. A special addition to our raffle prize table will be an exclusive one-hour consultation on your garden by Doug paired with a copy of his book.

Our regular meeting will begin promptly at 11:00 AM in the Fireside Room and will include election of 2020 officers. At 12:00 Noon, enjoy a delicious lunch in the Ballroom followed by Doug Oster's presentation.

Autumn will be in full regalia with tables festooned with pumpkins and fall colors, provided by Joan Stairs. The regular meeting is free, of course. Lunch and presentation is \$30.00.

Come to enjoy the sumptuous lunch and lively, colorful program, an all-around relaxing and educational day in an elegant setting. We will pull the winning tickets for our Fall Raffle. Call the office for reservations (724-8370245) by September 25, 2019. Or email at [ggc951@live.com](mailto:ggc951@live.com).

Greensburg Garden Center's Christmas Greens Sale Workshops  
Workshops will be every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM beginning Tuesday, Sept 17.

We have lots of beautiful supplies to use in making unique holiday decorations. Please join us for a day or an hour. All talent levels needed and appreciated. Bring your ideas and/or helping hands.



## **Judy's Jottings**

### **“Pennsylvania Symbols”**

I remember during my Pennsylvania History summer class taken at Clarion State College, discussing the three symbols of our state - ruffed grouse, eastern hemlock and mountain laurel. I thought that was all the state symbols that we would ever have – state bird, tree and flower. (Boy was I ever wrong!)

To date, Pennsylvania now has 31 symbols and more being proposed.

What determines a state symbol status?

A SYMBOL definition is as follows –

“Any type of symbol or imagery, including animals, plants, rocks, and even articles of clothing, that are chosen by the residents and legislators of a state within the United States to be representative of that state.”

Chosen by the residents?? I never remember being asked my opinion or vote on any of the current symbols. Were you?

The process to become a state symbol is the same used as proposing a bill to become a law. Introduction and sponsorship by a legislator, approval by both houses of the

Pennsylvania General Assembly and then signed into law by the Governor of Pennsylvania.

Recently an article appeared in my local newspaper stating that the Eastern Hellbender is now our state amphibian. What on Earth was a hellbender?

My research discovered that it is a really ugly salamander that never leaves the water and hides during the day under rocks in fast flowing rivers and streams.

Because of its poor eyesight, it only comes out at night to feed on insect larvae, slugs, woodlice, worms, hellgrammites and beetles.

Hellgrammites are nasty creatures! I helped my father collect them for trout fishing near Emporium, PA for many years. Handling them carefully was a lesson well-learned, as they bite.

The hellbender has a long, lizard-like body, colored brown with dark blotches. It can grow up to 28 inches long and has four legs. Add a flattened head and loose flaps of slimy skin down its body and that describes this amphibian. Snapping turtles, water snakes, large predatory fish and humans are its enemies. It is also called a snot otter, lasagna lizard, mud devil or Allegheny alligator.

Who on Earth proposed this creature as one of our state symbols?

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Lycoming College started the process to honor this salamander. Governor Wolf signed the bill on April 23, 2019.

I imagine that the market for a hellbender stuffed animal will be non-existing.

From its description, who would want to own one!

Here are some of our established state symbols -----

BIRD – Ruffed grouse - June 22, 1931  
TREE - Eastern hemlock - June 23, 1931  
FLOWER - Mountain laurel - May 5, 1933  
ANIMAL - White-tailed deer - October 2, 1959  
DOG - Great Dane - August 15, 1965  
FISH - Brook trout - May 9, 1970  
BEVERAGE - Milk - April 19, 1982  
PLANT - Penngift crownvetch - June 17, 1982  
SHIP - US Brig Niagara - April 29, 1988  
INSECT - Firefly - December 5, 1988  
FOSSIL – Trilobite - December 5, 1988  
SONG – Pennsylvania - November 29, 1990  
(Do you know the original words to the song?)  
FIREARM - Pennsylvania Long Rifle - June 26, 2014  
AMPHIBAN - Eastern hellbender - April 23, 2019

There are even several proposed symbols which have not completed the process –

Cookie (must be a chocolate chip)  
Toy – Slinky

I have some suggestions of my own for possible symbols----- Who would ask me?

Candy ( has to be a Hershey Bar)  
Snake ( should be eastern massasauga rattlesnake)  
Pie ( how about shoofly pie)  
Quilt ( pattern like Amish Star )  
Weather Forecaster (our famous Punxsutawny Phil)

How about a Garden Club program based on our state symbols? Maybe the Fish and Wildlife Commission could give a talk on the hellbender.

Does our local zoo have a living hellbender for public viewing? Contact them to promote getting this state symbol.

I volunteer for most projects, but going out at night to capture a slimy, hellbender is not at the top of my wish list. If you find one, let me know. They must be around, after all they are a Pennsylvania Symbol!

Submitted by Judith Schaffer  
Pucketos Garden Club

You know autumn is here when the evenings grow cooler and the leaves began to change from green to a dazzling array of colors. Then they begin to fall. That's when you reach for the rake. But there are other alternatives if you don't relish that task. Consider these other options.



## RECYCLE LEAVES

### **Mow Them**

Use a lawn mower with a bag attachment to handle leaf debris on your yard. Disposal becomes a simple matter once the ground-up leaves are collected in the bag.

### **Vacuum Them**

With a leaf vacuum, you can suck up all of the fallen leaves, twigs, acorns, pine cones and other debris into a bag and then grind them up for mulch or compost.

### **Blow Them**

A leaf blower is recommended for managing and redistributing fallen leaves in large yards with lots of trees but raking is more practical and less time consuming if you have a small lawn or garden area.

### **Mulch**

Leaves make great mulch. It's free and as good—if not better—than anything you can buy, especially if you are mulching next to anything white and want to keep it that way. "One of the biggest problems with wood mulch or wood chips," says arborist Max Burton, "is artillery fungus that fire their black spores onto buildings." This can cause damage to vinyl and wood siding as well as harm and infect nearby plants. Avoid this problem by using leaf mulch instead.

### **Compost**

Adding leaves along with grass, sticks, pine straw and a little soil to your compost pile will result in a high quality compost rich in nitrogen that is ideal for use in your vegetable garden or for shrub and tree plantings. community.

### **Educational Uses**

"Fall is always an opportunity for education for kids," Burton notes. "You can create leaf collections and press them into collages. They're extremely easy to preserve. Press them in newspapers so that the moisture is absorbed and they dry flat." This is an ideal way to label and identify the leaves of specific trees. An even simpler alternative is to create a digital photo collection of colorful fall leaves.

## Art Projects

Leaves that have fallen at the peak of their color can be preserved in a variety of presentations. You can make a leaf decoupage or a colorful seasonal wreath or a fall foliage centerpiece for decoration. You can also use leaves as stuffing for a scarecrow or Halloween yard figure.

## Great Vegetables for Fall Garden Production



The key to successful fall gardening hinges on planting the right types of fall vegetable varieties at the proper time for your region. Many vegetables prefer the cool growing conditions of autumn, and will even withstand and benefit from exposure to the cold and frosts. Favorite winter vegetables: leafy kale collards, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, turnips, rutabagas, beets, carrots, Swiss chard, leeks, oriental greens, endive, and lettuce.

Planting fall garden crops in mid to late summer gives the plants plenty of time to mature before winter sets in. Keep in mind that your plants will grow slower as the weather cools and the days become shorter. It may take a little experimenting and tracking of your results to determine the ideal planting times for fall vegetables in your growing region.

## Extra Protection for Fall Vegetable Plants

Fall gardening can help you get a jump on spring by planting crops that will germinate in the fall, survive the winter under a light mulch of straw or shredded leaves, and then resume growth at the first sign of spring arriving. Vegetables that will thrive under this treatment include: garlic, shallots, kale, collards, spinach, mache, and certain varieties of lettuce.

## To Help Birds This Winter, Go Easy on Fall Yard Work



If you want to make your backyard a welcoming winter haven for birds, some fall tasks call for a laissez-faire approach. “Messy is definitely good to provide food and shelter for birds during the cold winter months,” says Tod Winston, Audubon’s Plants for Birds program manager. So let someone else keep up with the neighbors this weekend. Sleep in, linger a little longer with your morning coffee, and follow these tips for a bird-friendly yard you can be proud of.



**Save the seeds.** When fall arrives, some tidy-minded gardeners might be inclined to snip the stems of perennials in the flower garden. But the seed heads of coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, and other native wildflowers provide a helpful food cache for birds. The almost invisible, but birds eat them all winter long. Grasses—not the stuff you mow, but native species like

bluestems or gramas—also make for good foraging after they go to seed. And letting other dead plants stick around can fill your property with protein-packed bird snacks in the form of insect larvae, such as the fly and wasp larvae that inhabit goldenrod galls.

**Leave the leaves.** You can help birds and other wildlife—and save yourself some backache and blisters—by skipping the leaf raking. Those leaves are important because they rot and enrich the soil, and also provide places for bugs and birds to forage for food. If a fully hands-off approach doesn't work for your yard, consider composting some leaves and letting the rest be. You could also rake them from the lawn to your garden beds, or mulch them with a mower to nourish your lawn.

**Build a brush pile.** Along with shaking loose showers of leaves, blustery fall days also tend to knock down tree limbs. Rather than hauling them away, you can use fallen branches to build a brush pile that will shelter birds from lousy weather and predators. American Tree Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, and other wintering birds will appreciate the protection from the elements. Rabbits, snakes, and other wildlife also will take refuge there. You'll find that the pile settles and decomposes over the seasons ahead, making room for next year's additions. (And it's a great place to dispose of your Christmas tree.)

**Skip the chemicals.** You might see your neighbors spreading “weed and feed” mixtures in the fall to fertilize their lawns and knock back crabgrass and other unwanted plants. In most cases, though, grass clippings and mulched leaf litter provide plenty of plant nutrition, and using store-bought fertilizers only encourages more non-native plants to grow. Generally speaking, native grasses, shrubs, trees, and flowering plants don't need chemical inputs. Save a few bucks and keep your yard healthy for bugs and birds.

**Hit the nursery.** Although laziness can be a good thing when it comes to creating a bird-friendly backyard, it's worth putting in some hard work planting native shrubs and trees. (Cooler temperatures also make fall a more comfortable time to tear out some turf grass and expand your native plant garden.) Native dogwoods, hawthorns, sumacs, and other flowering shrubs produce small fruits that not only feed birds during the colder months, but can also provide a welcome pop of color when winter gets drab. Planted in the right place, evergreens like cedars and firs give birds something to eat and a cozy shelter. Fall is also a great time to liven up your property with late-blooming perennials such as asters or sages—and to buy spring- and summer-blooming wildflowers at a substantial discount.



# Planting Hydrangeas



The time to plant a brand-new hydrangea is just around the corner: It might come as a surprise, but fall is the best time to plant these flowering shrubs. While it may not bloom during this season, you can look forward to lots of bright blooms come late spring. In fall, "the temperatures are usually more favorable" for new hydrangea plants. What's more, planting in fall gives "the plant time to establish a root system before the ground freezes, and then it's in place to give you a full season of color the following year."

When you're ready to plant, be sure to select a location that has morning sun and dappled afternoon shade. Hydrangea leaves can easily burn if exposed to too much sun. The perfect spot also has well-drained loam conditions—soil that is equal parts clay, silt, and sand. This plant really likes well-drained soil that's rich in nutrients, if you've got heavy clay or sand, make sure that you're amending the soil for good drainage—using gypsum in clay—and enough water retention by adding peat moss in sand.

Most hydrangeas that come from a garden center will have some fertilizer in the potting mix, but it's okay to add some granular, slow-release fertilizer for an extra kick of energy. Fertilizers that are "focused on bloom boosting, like Espoma's Flower-Tone fertilizer is recommended After your plant has taken root fertilize twice a year. Do not over-fertilize your hydrangea: "Adding fertilizer weekly can add too much nitrogen to the soil, which can actually slow bloom production. Water it well.

Your freshly-planted hydrangea will need a little more water than established plants, which prefer well-drained soil. The first time you water it, allow the dam to fill and drain—then water it once more.

### Pruning Hydrangeas:

Think of pruning this billowy bloom as giving it an annual physical: It's essential to maintaining good health.

Two popular varieties, Mophead and Lacecap, come in blue, pink, and purple, with thick, shiny leaves. Mophead produces large, ball-shaped flower clusters, while Lacecap's clusters are flat and delicate. They bloom on old wood (stems that have been on the bush since the summer before) and should be pruned in the summer when the flowers have started to fade but before August hits. A bush can be trimmed by cutting back stems close to a node. If a plant is overgrown, prune back about one-third of the older stems almost to the ground.

