



THE HORT REPORT

NEWSLETTER OF THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF MARYLAND, INC. | SEPTEMBER 2015

KOINONIA: *A Story of Peace, Love and Herbs*

By Lisa M. Airey

Koinonia, the oldest certified organic farm in Maryland and one of the oldest in the country, supplies fresh herbs to select Baltimore-area supermarkets. Here's how it began.

On the heels of World War II, 12 Protestant ministers established a spiritual center in Maryland's Green Spring Valley. The goal was to spread peace and Christianity by wholesome example. They worked a 45-acre estate and trained individuals in teaching literacy and organic farming methods in the hopes that good earth, willing hands, open hearts and a vision would heal a damaged world.

In its first 15 years, the Koinonia Foundation trained more than 300 people and sent them to over 50 countries. Its social ideals of sharing and fellowship (Koinonia, pronounced Koin-a-NEE-a, is Greek for "community") had enough appeal to earn government funding, but its focus on food grown without agro-chemical input was a complete anomaly.

American food culture was undergoing a thorough transformation in the post-war era as the U.S. industrial complex applied wartime technologies to manufacturing and agriculture. Radar, developed during World War II, gave rise to the microwave oven. Swanson introduced the frozen TV dinner.

Farms were growing big and becoming industrialized; farmers became conversant in insecticides, herbicides and fungicides. Interstate highway construction, begun in 1956, created the infrastructure for delivering food by truck coast to coast.

Food became mass-produced and mass-marketed, shipped thousands of miles from where it was grown. Supermarkets eclipsed the local grocer to meet the demands of burgeoning population centers. Food was processed and shelved and, as a result, additives and preservatives became a part of what America consumed.

But not at Koinonia. Today, Koinonia—owned by HSM member Anne Pomykala—is the oldest continuously operated organic farm in Maryland. In fact, it pre-dates Maryland's organic certification program and was originally certified organic by Pennsylvania.

About 40 people were permanent residents of Koinonia, living among its cluster of apartments and cottages, but there were just as many visitors on

— continued on page 4

LECTURE SERIES

Tuesday, SEPTEMBER 8, 7:30 p.m.

BRENT HEATH

Gardening with Flower Bulbs

Brent Heath is a third-generation bulb grower and co-owner of Brent and Becky's Bulbs of Gloucester, Va., one of America's best known flower bulb producers. He will discuss ways to achieve stunning color combinations in your garden.

Tuesday, OCTOBER 13, 7:30 p.m.

CAROL WARNER

Peonies: Herbaceous, Tree and Itoh Hybrids

HSM member Warner owns Draycott Gardens in Upperco, an online/mail-order business. A grower of Peonies for four decades, Warner will focus on the many forms, colors and cultural aspects of Peonies.

Tuesday, NOVEMBER 10, 7:30 p.m.

CLAUDIA WEST

Stunning Plant Communities that Stand the Test of Time

West, the ecological sales manager at North Creek Nurseries in Landenberg, Pa., will show how to use perennials in combinations that increase the ornamental, functional and ecological value of your landscape.

Tuesday, DECEMBER 8, 7:30 p.m.

DAVID THOMPSON

Beautiful Evergreens for the Garden and Holiday Cutting

HSM member Thompson, owner of Foxborough Nursery Inc. in Harford County, will share the newest, best and most unusual evergreens to brighten your home and to provide garden interest throughout the year.

For more information, visit www.mdhorticulture.org

Lectures are held in the Vollmer Center auditorium at Cylburn Arboretum, 4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21209. Members are required to show a current membership card for admission to lectures. Guests of members also receive free admission. In case of severe weather, check the HSM website for any cancellation bulletin.

COMING HSM EVENTS

ANNUAL PLANT & SEED SWAP

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2015

Starts at 6:30 p.m. and ends at 7:15 p.m.

For members and their guests.



This is the “one for one” swap before the October lecture. Take your plants and seed packets—marked with botanical name—to the front of the Vollmer Center, then look for plants to add to your garden.

BOOK SALE & SIGNING

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2015

“On Walnut Hill: The Evolution of a Garden”

See page 7 for more information.

JANUARY PLANT FORUM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2016

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

For HSM members only.

Free but you must register in advance.

PERENNIAL PLANT ASSOCIATION & HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF MARYLAND SEMINAR

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2016

8:45 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sheppard Pratt Conference Center
Towson, Maryland

Please join us for the annual winter seminar. Details to follow.

ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR

SUNDAY, JUNE 5, 2016

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The 2016 tour will feature gardens in Roland Park, Guilford, and Tuscany/Canterbury.

HSM Honor Roll

We thank the following volunteers (members as well as non-members) who have supported the Society's programs in recent months.

For the Tashiding event: Lenel Srochi-Meyerhoff and Jean Silber, co-chairs; Michael Bass, Ann and Alan Betten, Peter Bieneman, Helene Clapperton, Catherine and Bill Cook, Crystal Patterson, Nancy and Steve Raskin, Mary Jo Sherrod, Paula Simon, Robin Winters, Bill and Susan Yonkers

For the Tool Drive: Lenel Srochi-Meyerhoff, Yana Demireva (Community Greening Resource Network Coordinator for Parks & People), Nancy Raskin, Bill and Susan Yonkers

For the Annual Garden Tour Committee: Ann Betten and Donna Imhoff, co-chairs; Anne Gossett, Tanya Jones, Crystal Patterson and Nell Strachan; Shelley Wygant, publicity

For the Annual Garden Tour Weekend Volunteers:

Carol Anderson-	Susan Carey	Tanya Jones	Barbara Sutton
Austra	Catherine Cook	Mary Ann Ley	Kathleen VanderHorst
Nance Backer	Marion DeGross	Karen Lock	Peter Ward
Chris Bangs	Jennifer Forrence	Sandy Markowitz	Salli Ward
Alan Betten	Anne Gossett	Nancy MicKey	Jacqui Weinstock
Ann Betten	Janet Gross	Susan Moore	Dorothy Wells
Nancy Blois	Ellen Herwig	Geri Pare	Cynthia Wilber
Carol Bloom	Barbara Houck	Crystal Patterson	Dorrie Wilfong
Max Bloom	Donna Imhoff	Mary Jo Sherrod	Shelley Wygant
Glenn Carey	Bruce Jones	Nell Strachan	

For the Sponsorship Program: Sally Barker and Paula Simon

For the Lecture Series Committee: Paula Simon and Mary Jo Sherrod, coordinators; Helene Clapperton, Muffin Evander, John Fitzpatrick, Karen Offutt and Carol Oppenheimer

For Meetings Hospitality: Donna Watts, Jennifer Forrence, Nancy Blois and Pat Sherman

For the Plant Raffle: Nancy MicKey

For the Communications Team: Michael Bass, telephone messages; Helene Clapperton, webmaster; Carla Hackley, Facebook manager; Nancy Raskin, event registrar; and John Fitzpatrick, Harry Merritt and Margaret Wright, May mailing

For the May 2015 issue of The Hort Report: Jean Mellott, John Fitzpatrick, contributors; Ann Betten, Robert Cardillo, Paula Simon, and Sara Seifter, photographs; Joel Cohen and John Fitzpatrick, proofreaders

Scotland Garden Tour

Join the HSM on a tour of Scotland's gardens September 13-25, 2016. The 13-day, 12-night tour—co-sponsored by HSM and the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland—will include visits to Edinburgh Castle, Loch Lomond and the house and gardens of Sir Walter Scott, among many others.

For the complete itinerary and cost, contact Claire Jones at Jonesb1@comcast.net or 443-927-6285, or visit www.mdhorticulture.org/trips or <https://thegardendiaries.wordpress.com/trips/>

Iris graminea, Plum-tart Iris

By John T. Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.

One of the most charming of beardless Irises is the Plum-tart Iris, *Iris graminea*. I recall the first time I saw the plant. It was in the late 1970s in Winterthur's Peony garden, where it had been planted as a groundcover. The narrow, dark green leaves were a delightful contrast with the larger Peony leaves above them. And, then, I was amazed to find that it had a sweet, fruity fragrance, which is unusual among beardless irises. Inspired by that memory, I have sought out and cultivated the species in several gardens over the years.

Also known as Grass-leaved Iris, the species occurs naturally in woods, meadows, gravelly mountain sites and waste places in central and southeastern Europe east into the Caucasus mountains. The leaves arch over gracefully similar to the habit of the pale green leaves of Crested Iris, *Iris cristata*. Leaves of *I. graminea*, however, are glossy and taller—10 to 14 inches high. One or two flowers emerge from each bloom-stalk. The flowers look like Dutch Irises but smaller, about 2 inches across. They are bluish violet with white falls veined deep purple. The flowers are held at about the level of the arched leaves, which makes them appear to float. The fragrance is described variously as resembling Freesia, Apricot or Plum. It reminds me of Sweet Mignonette, *Reseda odorata*.

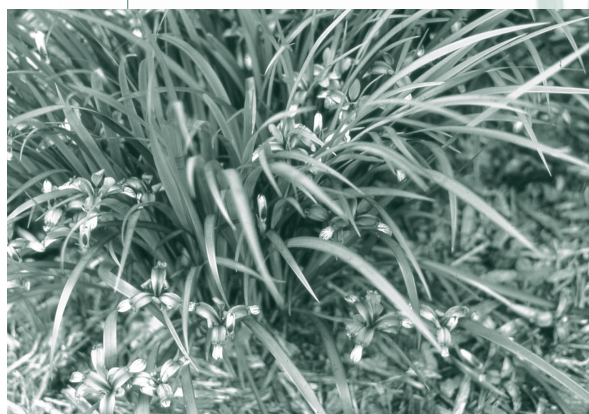
Like the familiar Bearded Irises, the Plum-tart Iris has perennial rhizomes but they are slender—a little thinner than a pencil—and close-packed. A common means of propagation is division in late summer but this is not an Iris that *requires* division. Divisions can take two years to re-establish and flower. It is best to leave a clump alone until it requires renewal. For propagation, there are often a few seed capsules produced on an established clump. Seeds may be sown outdoors in autumn for spring germination.

Plants of the species will grow in full sun but, in my experience, part shade produces a better clump in our area. The plant is hardy in USDA Zones 3 through 8. It tolerates dry, clay or heavy soils but grows best with a consistent supply of moisture and good drainage. An established clump of Plum-tart Iris is a joy to behold.

John T. Fitzpatrick, Ph.D., former HSM president, is an adjunct professor in the landscape architecture program at Morgan State University.



Plum-tart Iris bloom and bud peeking through its grass-like foliage.



This compact plant grows well in the front of sunny to partly shady borders.

SOURCES:

Sequim Rare Plants
500 North Sequim Ave.
Sequim, WA 98382
Tel. 360-775-1737
sequimrareplants.com

Arrowhead Alpines
P. O. Box 857
Fowlerville, MI 48836
Tel. 517-223-3581
arrowheadalpines.com

TOP PHOTO: Franz Xaver
BOTTOM PHOTO:
John Fitzpatrick

ILLUSTRATION: Curtis's
Botanical Magazine, 1803

KOINONIA: Peace, Love and Herbs

— continued from page 1

any given day. While America embraced Tang, the tenants at Koinonia sowed seeds. While America ate trucked iceberg lettuce, the farmers at Koinonia picked herbs and embraced and evangelized a farm-to-table lifestyle.

As an organization, Koinonia preceded the Peace Corps by a decade, but the Peace Corps ended up eclipsing them and Koinonia lost its grant monies. In an effort to stay afloat, the foundation reorganized in the 1960s with a New Age focus and became a center of study for yoga, meditation, art, dance, and music. Organic gardening remained as part of the food culture...a culture that focused on natural foods, consumed locally, as part of a wholesome, consciousness-raising lifestyle.

But the yogurt-making, bean sprout-eating 1960s and 1970s gave way to the fast-paced 1980s—a decade when cars were first equipped with cup holders and drive-through windows became mainstream. Koinonia faced bankruptcy and the property went up for auction in 1985.

Anne and Ronald Pomykala, Washington, D.C. natives, purchased the property and began the long and costly task of renovation and repair.

“Every roof leaked,” Anne Pomykala said in a recent interview. “Only one well worked. I was hunting for money, so we fixed up the rental apartments first. But naturally, we kept the farm. From a historical perspective, I wanted to keep that distinction of being the oldest continuously operating organic farm in Maryland. That first year, we sold produce to Sutton Place and Jumbo Grocery (now Shoppers). My husband would make deliveries on his way to his dental practice in D.C. Gas was cheap back then, so you could drive around and make deliveries like that and still make money.”

“But tomatoes are heavy and fragile,” she said. “Lettuce is a spring crop. You plant, harvest, then replant. But with herbs, you plant and cut every three to four weeks. The return on investment is far greater and the financial cost much less. Within seven years, our sole focus was culinary herbs.”

But herbs were not the only thing growing. The Pomykalas—the name is pronounced POM-e-cal-a—renovated two of the larger structures on the property, the manor house (Gramercy Mansion) and its carriage house, then turned them into picturesque event venues. They opened a bed and breakfast.

The History of Gramercy Mansion

Alexander Cassatt, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad and brother of the Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt, purchased the Green Spring Valley estate as a wedding present for his daughter, Eliza Stewart. He built a manor house, Gramercy Mansion, and an 18-stall carriage house for her on the property in 1902. Cassatt died before construction was complete and the property was sold to Felix S. Landstreet, vice president of the Western Maryland Railroad. Landstreet lived there briefly before selling the estate in 1912 to industrialist Benjamin H. Brewster. The Brewsters sold the estate to financier Hugo Hoffmann, who in turn sold the property to Koinonia in 1950. The current owners, Anne and Ronald Pomykala, bought the property at auction in 1985 and lovingly restored it to the showplace it is today.



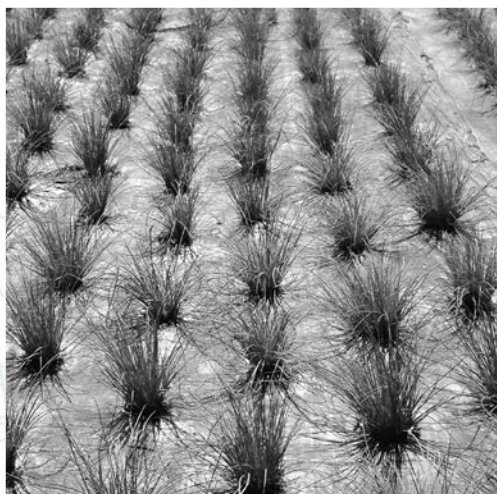
Entrance Garden at Gramercy Mansion

PHOTOS ON PAGE 5 AND 7: Gramercy Mansion

PHOTOS ON PAGE 6: Lisa M. Airey



Koinonia Herb Farm



Growing Chives



Packaging Basil

“The first garden I planted was a vegetable garden for the family,” explained Anne. “My love is gardening. Gradually, working around the woods and the hardscape, I planted flowers.”

“We host 140 weddings a year and the gardens are a big part of the reason people hold their events here,” she continued. “But the herb farm is more profitable than everything else we do when counted independently... rentals, events and B&B. Being organic wasn’t big in the past, but it is now. And we are established and reliable.”

Each Tuesday, from April through November, Anne leads garden tours throughout the grounds and shares her knowledge of all things green.

The pendulum has indeed swung back to Koinonia’s founding precepts and the locavore movement—eating locally grown food—is surging. In 1974, there were about 100 farmer’s markets in the United States; now there are close to 3,000.

Raina Gover, farm manager and executive assistant, is proud of the operation she oversees. “You need food safety certification,” she explains. “We are USDA Harmonized Gap Certified...that is one step below a global certification for food safety. And it’s expensive. It’s expensive to be certified organic. There is a lot of record keeping and auditing, but we don’t want to lose this [organic certification]. The locavore movement is strong and more and more people want organic. And they want to go from farm to table.”

Koinonia currently grows and harvests 11-14,000 pounds of herbs a year. They sell to Giant, Whole Foods Market and Mom’s Organic Market...and they do this with 5-10 employees while only in operation from May until October. All the herbs are grown in fields or in the ground in hoop houses and everything is planted and picked by hand.

“We’ve lost oregano and rosemary over the past two years because of the winter cold,” explains Raina, “But we’ve just purchased a 60,000-square-foot greenhouse facility and are in the process of cleaning that up and getting it certified organic. We’re hoping to double production. We sell out of mint, basil and thyme every week.”

The projected date for greenhouse-grown herbs is November 2015. The demand is there. But as the saying goes, experience is a hard teacher... she gives the test first and the lesson after.

“Stevia has come of age!” states Anne, with an emphatic but soft fist to the table. “I forced it into the pipeline telling our stores that ‘this is what people want’. I was wrong. People don’t know what to do with it. There are so many herbs that I wish I *could* grow. Lovage, for example! I can’t believe it’s not more popular. And lemon verbena! It’s a great, great herb. So is pineapple sage! Lemon basil? No one wants that either.”

Koinonia Organic Herbs

Basil, Chives, Cilantro, Dill,
Marjoram, Oregano, Parsley, Sage,
Sorrel, Spearmint, Stevia, Tarragon,
Thai Basil, Thyme

They also package a roasting herb blend and a poultry herb blend.

— continued on page 6

HSM Garden Tour of Brittany & Normandy



What was most special about this year's 'gardenaholics' tour to France? Meeting the owners and discovering the lush exotic gardens that take advantage of the mild climate in the northwest corner of the country.

COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: 1. Guillaume Pellerin, second-generation gardener at Jardin Botanique de Vauville, guided us through his subtropical and tropical paradise. 2 & 3. Exotic plants at Jardins Georges Delaselle. 4. A beautiful stand of South African native Calla Lilies at Parc Boutanique de Cornouaille. 5. In a garden of earthly delights, tour members explore Crech ar Pape, the garden of Timothy and Isabelle Vaughan. — *Paula A. Simon*



2015 Garden Tour & Preview Party



FROM THE TOP:

- Tour sponsors, Lesley and Frank Dudek and John and Sue Slater.
- Jacqui Weinstock and Crystal Patterson at the Voss garden.
- Darlene Wells, Pat Mott, and Ruth Seaby at Gristmill Garden.
- Garden Tour committee chair Ann Betten and Nancy Blois.

PHOTOS: Janet Gross and Paula A. Simon

KOINONIA: Peace, Love and Herbs

— *continued from page 5*

"I wish we could sell squash blossoms, but they are too fragile. And edible flowers like nasturtium and calendula...too fragile. But we use them here. At the B&B, we garnish the omelets with the petals of both. Nasturtium hints of radish and calendula adds a buttery note. Of course, we put them in salads also. And we garnish our fruit plates with chocolate mint."

Anne's passion is tempered by the market she serves. For this reason, Koinonia is sticking with what works and they are growing what the consumer demands. So far, it has been a recipe for success and one that will carry them from farm to table to tomorrow and beyond.

Lisa M. Airey, a Baltimore County Master Gardener, is an expert on wine and a published author.

Tuesdays with Anne

Anne Pomykala leads tours of Gramercy Mansion's landscaped gardens at 11 a.m. on Tuesdays. Cost is \$20 per person and a picnic lunch is included. Private group tours can be arranged Monday through Thursday based on availability (10-guest minimum). Reservations can be made by calling 410-486-2405 or at info@gramercymansion.com one week before the desired booking date.

The Gramercy Mansion is located at 1400 Greenspring Valley Road, Stevenson, MD 21153.



On Walnut Hill: The Evolution of a Garden

Mark your calendars for October 22, when the Vollmer Center will be the site of the launch of the new book, *On Walnut Hill: The Evolution of a Garden*.



Written by Kathy Hudson with photographs by Roger Foley, the full-color book features the garden that HSM members A.C. and Penney Hubbard of Ruxton developed with the help of the late Kurt Bluemel.

“The Hubbards are avid collectors of Acers, conifers, unusual plants and trees, and garden sculpture,” said Allen Bush, who wrote the book’s foreword.

HSM, the Cylburn Arboretum Association, the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks and The Ivy Bookshop are co-sponsors of the book event, which will take place from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Also opening then will be “Over Time, Under Light: Garden Photography on Walnut Hill” and an exhibit of sculpture by metalsmith Matthew Harris, whose work is in the Hubbard garden. Proceeds from the sale of the art will benefit, in part, the Cylburn Arboretum Association.

The exhibit will also be open in the Vollmer Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on October 23-24 and October 27-29. Foley will give a lecture at 2 p.m. on October 25. (The Vollmer Center will be closed on Monday, October 26.)

The events are free, but those interested in attending should notify The Ivy Bookshop at info@theivybookshop.com.

On Walnut Hill will cost \$50. It is being published in October by Hillside Press LLC, of Wilson, Wyo. The web site for the book is onwalnuthill.com.

On Tuesday, December 8, Hudson will return to the Vollmer Center for a book sale and signing before and after the HSM lecture with David Thompson.

Hudson, a garden writer, is a regular contributor to *Baltimore Style Magazine*, *The Baltimore Messenger*, and *Baltimore Fishbowl*. Roger Foley’s work has been featured in books, including his most recent, *A Clearing in the Woods: Creating Contemporary Gardens*, and in *Garden Design*, *Horticulture*, *Southern Living* and *Home & Design*.

Matthew Harris began working as a metalsmith as an apprentice at age 16 and has had his own workshop since 2007. He has completed a number of architectural projects, including a railing in the Hubbards’ garden.

Tashiding: A Splendid Day and Successful Event

HSM members Douglas and Tsognie Hamilton graciously opened their Western Run property, Tashiding, for a tour and luncheon to benefit the Vollmer Center Garden on May 31.

In total, more than \$8,500 was raised. Special thanks go to the Hamilton family for their generous hospitality, and to Pauline Vollmer, Max Bloom and the Dr. Frank C. Marino Foundation Inc. for their additional support.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

- Carol Brody, Mary Jo Sherrod, and Douglas Hamilton II
- Tsognie Hamilton
- Ben and Marjorie Bates
- Maggie Neely and Kate Blom
- Luncheon in the pool pavilion
- Max Bloom, Carol Bloom, and Jean Silber
- Douglas Hamilton III and Catherine Cook

PHOTOS: Paula A. Simon

HSM in the Community



The society's fourth annual tool drive, held before the May meeting, collected more than \$3,000 worth of donations to help support community garden groups. Special thanks go to Bill and Susan Yonkers, who made the Tool Drive a beneficiary of their move. Lenel Srochi-Meyerhoff, HSM board member, and Yana Demireva, Community Greening Resource Network coordinator for the Parks and People Foundation, organized the event.



The Sidney Silber Scholarship Award was presented to Josh Demers, allowing him to attend the 2015 winter seminar sponsored by HSM and the Perennial Plant Association. He is a plant sciences and landscape management major at the University of Maryland College Park.



The society awarded \$1,200 grants to the Howard P. Rawlings Conservatory's Community Gardening Day and to Friends of Great Kids Farm Inc.



The Horticultural Society of Maryland Scholarships are awarded to students in the Sustainable Horticulture program at the Community College of Baltimore County.



For the fifth year, HSM co-sponsored a garden intern at Cylburn Arboretum for the summer. The society's \$2,500 contribution was matched by the Cylburn Arboretum Association and the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland. The intern was Jackson W. Lehman, a Master of Landscape Architecture degree student at Morgan State University.



Twenty-six Baltimore City Master Gardener interns received a complimentary HSM membership through the end of the membership year.



Welcome New Members!

Wendy Albert	Cynthia Coster
Hilary Andrew	Josh Demers
Lucille Andrew	Barbara DeRose
Susan Behen	Anne Dunham
Liz Blue	Valerie Eisman
Ann Boyce	Bob and Bettie Farmer
Warren and Eva Brill	Nicole Grillon
Joyce Browning	Donna Kelly
Mary Burcham	Roxann Luttner
Gail Burns	Margaret Mackey
Mason Campbell	Suzanne Mapp
Frank Cirincione	Gerri Meyers
Donna Cline	Mary H. Miles
Margaret Collins	Michelle Lynne Miller

Felicity and Lloyd Missler
Shaun Moeller
David G. Ober
Achsah O'Donovan
Sally Over
Kimberly Palmer
Lauren Pitcock
Barbara Powell
William Pully
Eleanor Reade
Deborah Rosenberg
Margaret Sanders
Christine Schneider

Leanne Simm
Lisa Smith
Wendy Spealman
Janice Staples
Mark C. Taylor
Nick Thrappas
Barbara Vaeth
Barbara Voss
Jean Whitin
Elizabeth Byrd Wood
Martha Workman

Help for THE HORT REPORT

Do you enjoy taking pictures? THE HORT REPORT would welcome help from one or two volunteer photographers to take pictures at HSM events. If interested, please contact Harry Merritt at harrywmerritt@gmail.com or 410-583-9241.



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Catherine Cook,
Vice President for Membership
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Bill Yonkers, *Secretary*

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Jennifer Forrence, *ex officio*
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Muffin Evander
John T. Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.
Pauline Vollmer
Jean Worthley

NEWSLETTER

Harry Merritt, *Editor*
Paula A. Simon, *Designer*

VOLLMER CENTER GARDEN

Peter Bieneman, *Manager*

MEMBERSHIP

For information about membership or to join, visit the society's website: www.mdhorticulture.org or telephone Catherine Cook at 410-821-5561.

Benefits of Membership

Newsletters and membership directory; admission to the spring and fall lectures and the annual garden tour; and discounts on workshops, trips and special events.

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