



www.actongardenclub.org

The Monthly AGC 'Dirt'

November 2022

November 1st monthly meeting in room 204 at Town Hall and hybrid over Zoom

Zoom address:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81378724275?pwd=bWpUMXRqQmZuSEIUREdzS3FOUjUrZz09>

Meeting ID: 813 7872 4275

Passcode: 739789

If you can't find a parking space in the Town Hall or Library parking lots, try behind the Acton Center Fire Station or the Congregation Church's parking lot. Don't forget to use the flashing light at the crosswalks on Main Street. Why not carpool to the meeting?

November 1st Business Meeting

10 AM Social Time

10:15 Program: **Botany for Gardeners** with Gretel Anspach. *Botany* is the branch of biology dealing with plants. You can be a fabulous gardener and know next to nothing about botany. But if you learn a little botany, patterns start emerging and keeping your garden healthy and vibrant becomes much easier. A little knowledge about botany can also open your eyes to the fascinating ways plants have adapted to be able to grow in almost every environment on earth.



Gretel Anspach is a Trustee of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, a Lifetime Master Gardener with the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association, and a recently-retired systems engineer for Raytheon. She won the MMGA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016. Gretel established and maintains a 20,000 square foot food production garden that has provided fresh produce to the Marlboro and Maynard Food Pantries for the last ten years. Her primary interest and focus is always in the science behind horticulture.

November 8th 9 AM Horticulture Study Group will meet at Helen Webster's home, 15 Long Ridge Road. Fran Portante will lead the group in the program on *Native Plants in the Landscape*.

November 29th Board Meeting will meet at 9 AM at Sherry Ryder's home, 5 Old Oregon Trail.

Membership

We would like to welcome **Barbara (aka Barb) Raney** as a new member. She would like to join the happy crew of Civic Beautification who bring floral highlights to the public spaces in town. Barb is interested in learning more about the club's Floral Design Study Group.

Please add Barb's info to page 86 in your yearbook:

Barbara Raney, 11 Long Ridge Road, Acton. Cell phone: 650-922-6616, bjraney@gmail.com

If you have a change of phone number or email address, please let Melissa Coucke, membership chairman know. She can be reached at mjcoucke@gmail.com or 650-454-5635.



October 11th
Check out the blue sky the day of the Horticulture Study Group's field trip to Ropes Mansion Gardens in Salem, MA. You can tell by the jackets it was a crisp sunny day.

NY Times October 17th

There are approximately **7,500 varieties** of apples currently grown in the world, and **2,500 in the United States alone**. Do you have a favorite apple? Braeburns, Winesaps and Honeycrisps are great for eating out of hand, but for **pie baking** think of firm cultivars such as Mutsus, Cortlands and Granny Smiths. McIntoshes in autumn, are super fresh, surprisingly sweet-tart and juicy. (The rest of the year they're best for **applesauce**). Did you know it takes **20 pounds of apples to produce a gallon of cider**?

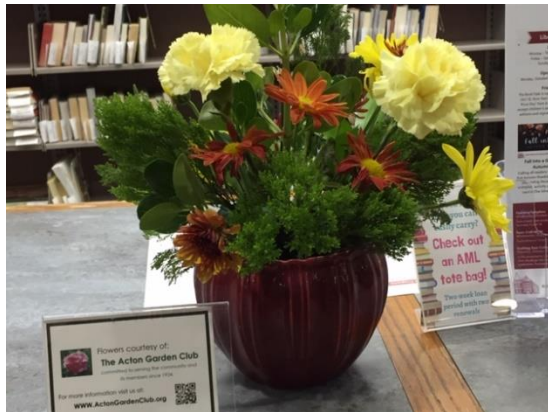
David Manalan provided me with the wonderfully informative article on *The Chemicals Behind the Colors of Autumn Leave*.

<https://www.compoundchem.com/2014/09/11/autumnleaves/>

Shirley Towle Lecture



On Oct 13th the **Acton Garden Club** collaborated with the **Acton Conservation Trust** and **EnergizeActon** to bring **Anna Filakoff** of the **Wild Seed Project** to Acton to speak. She presented "**Garden As If the Earth Matters**" Our 3 groups share a desire to help our community understand the importance of caring for the environment. Anna's talk was a wonderful way to show what we all can do to make a positive impact. We had 147 people attend over zoom and around 30 people in person.



Peggy Garrison's arrangement is the first of many beautiful floral arrangements by AGC members to adorn the Acton Memorial Library's circulation desk. Isn't it fun to have Mother Nature as your inspiration for your color pallet?



How about these gorgeous fall colors that Eileen Ryan incorporated in her floral arrangement greeting patrons at the circulation desk at the Acton Memorial Library?

Slots are still available for your creative design to appear at the library. Contact Peggy Garrison at peggygarrison1@verizon.net.

Sign up for the December HOLIDAY GREENS WORKSHOP!

Tuesday, December 6, 2022 – 9:00 AM

St. Matthew's Church, 435 Central St., Acton

Thelma Shoneman & Cathy Fochtman will present:

Holiday Centerpiece

We'd like to offer you something a little different this season! Join us in designing a stunning pot-et-fleur in a long lined wooden box. The plant will be a 4" poinsettia and cut greens will be arranged in same-variety groupings. Berries, shiny balls and white-tipped pinecones will finish it beautifully. Bring your own greens and your pruners. If you have extra greens, please bring them to share. It is also handy to bring a brown paper bag for your cuttings.


Please submit payment to Cathy Fochtman for \$15 cash or check made out to "Acton Garden Club", memo "Holiday Workshop" to cover purchase of supplies.

A sample will be shown at the November meeting. If you miss this sign-up, or have questions, call or e-mail Cathy Fochtman, lcfochtman@gmail.com to register.

Please register by Friday, November 25th.

New Yorker Magazine October 17, 2022

"Any amateur can grow a pumpkin bigger than himself, but today's giant pumpkins are closer in size to a Volkswagen Beetle," Nicola Twilley noted, in 2014, in a report about the world of competitive pumpkin growing, in which some entries weigh in at more than a thousand pounds. As for the art of giant-pumpkin breeding? "Growers hand-pollinate their plants, waking up at dawn to tickle the female

pumpkin flowers gently with paintbrushes dipped in pollen." Spooky!  This year's winning giant pumpkin in California weighed in at 2560 pounds!

Joy Madden sent the following from "Birds and Blooms" magazine.

DIY Weed (and everything nearby) Killer Recipe

- 1-gallon vinegar (with 5% acetic acid)
- 1 oz. dish soap
- Plastic spray bottle.

Directions: Mix the vinegar and soap together and pour into a spray bottle and spray onto weeds.

Application Tips

Before you apply this weed killer in your garden, here are some guidelines:

- Vinegar/soap weed killer is non-selective, which means that it will also damage/kill your desirable plants. So be careful when applying to weeds.
- Apply on a sunny day with no wind. The sun helps the vinegar to dry out the weed. You also want to wait for a windless day so that your spray won't inadvertently spray onto other plants.
- Your vinegar weed killer may or may not kill the root of the weed. You may need to reapply it if green growth shows up afterward or pour a little of the weed killer over the root zone to thoroughly kill large weeds.
- Vinegar/soap weed killer will not kill all types of weeds. Experiment in your own garden to see which types of weeds it works on.

So, next time you need to kill weeds, simply open your cupboard and make your own weed killer with vinegar and soap. It's natural, effective and cheap!



We don't need Charlie Brown and the rest of the Peanuts gang to remind us how great pumpkins are. Their large, easy-to-plant seeds make them especially delightful for kids to grow. Pumpkins require warm soil and a long growing period (90-110 days!) to go from seed to fully ripe. Perhaps all that waiting is why people have come up with so many fun and creative ways to use pumpkins! Here are a few ways to handle a plentiful pumpkin crop that we think are just — GREAT!



Carve them

Just about any type of pumpkin makes for fun carving. Don't be afraid to experiment with unique heirloom varieties that come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.



Collect them

Consider using a [Melon and Squash Cradle](#) to prevent rot and promote ripening of smaller varieties. Harvest pumpkins before they can be damaged by frost. Like other winter squash, [pumpkins should be stored](#) in a cool, dry, indoor room.



Cook With Them

From [ravioli to crème caramel](#), pumpkins can grace the kitchen table in many delicious forms, including sweet treats, savory soups, and salty, crunchy roasted pumpkin seeds. Varieties labeled "pie pumpkin" or "sugar pumpkin" will have the sweetest, most flavorful flesh.

Get Cooking with Pumpkin



The orange flesh of pumpkins is sweet enough for pie, cake or muffins, yet savory enough for soup or soufflé hollowed-out shell can be used as a serving vessel. Even the seeds make a healthy snack. Yet, pumpkins are not likely to be on your grocery list, unless you are shopping for Halloween. And when it comes to pumpkin pie, many canned commercial brands actually contain winter squash — such as butternut — because it tends to be less stringy and more flavorful. A typical Halloween pumpkin can be watery and bland-tasting.

For a delicious pumpkin pie, it's essential to grow (or buy) a **pie pumpkin**, otherwise known as a **sugar pumpkin**. These small orange orbs weigh an average of 4 pounds. Once they are peeled, quartered and baked for an hour to soften, they yield about two cups of puree, just enough for a pie — or something else.

Pumpkins are part of the **cucurbit family**, yet the term pumpkin is generic for "large, hard-skinned squash," which includes *butternut*, *Cushaw*, *Hubbard* and *Red Kuri*. This family has many cousins, including a host of ornamental pumpkins, such as mini pumpkins — which are more of a gourd — and jumbo pumpkins, which require a special diet to pump up the flesh. Take a walk back in time, when most of the pumpkins and the winter squash were derived from an American heirloom, the **cheese pumpkin**. In the early 1800s, settlers from Europe grew the pumpkin, which was so-named because of its resemblance to a wheel of aged cheese: creamy tan on the outside with a distinctive lobed top.

Pumpkins and winter squash are grown universally, yet many are regional in nature. In some parts of the world, pumpkins are a staple: Latin American cooks use them in casseroles, Indians make curry, while Italians fill tiny ravioli and serve them with crisp sage leaves as garnish. Get to know these generous vegetables as more than Halloween decorations, and you will be eating very well indeed.