



Garden Love

Greetings!

Our glorious spring weather has temporarily disappeared and the reality of February in CT has returned. What a perfect excuse to gather together with like-minded garden lovers and talk plants! You will have many opportunities to do so in the coming weeks, starting with this Saturday when I will be teaching two inspirational workshops. The first is all about The Healing Power of Plants. Open up your heart to the reason that we all really love gardening. This is a perfect way to celebrate Valentine's Day weekend. The afternoon workshop is all about Growing the Healing Herbs. I weave herbs into all of my gardens and into every aspect of my life. You can too. We have a lot of people already signed up, but walk-ins are always welcome. All of the details are below and on our website.

Winter is the ideal time to dream



In this Saturday's class about the healing power of plants, you will explore how water in the garden is so good for your soul, and for the creatures you share your yard with. This is my water garden, with newly born Japanese maple flowers and leaves emerging in the spring. I sit on the edge of this garden and try and spot my frog to center myself when I get home from work each evening.

about the changes you are going to make in 2016. My hopes for the growing season ahead are many. I want to grow even more food than before. My husband and I just finished up the last of our frozen blueberries and peaches. What a winter treat they are, and SO needed right now. I wish I had enough for another two months. It's not because I didn't harvest enough, I just didn't freeze enough! All you have to do is spread them out on a cookie sheet, place them in the freezer

for a few hours, then pour them into freezer bags. Too easy. The peaches were frozen in a simple syrup of honey and lemon basil. See what I mean? Herbs can be woven into everything!

We are all into buying seeds at this time of year. Thank you to all of the super-enthusiastic seed shoppers at Seedy Sunday last weekend. What a crazy, exciting day! Seeds are being reordered today, and the racks will be wrapped up and loaded into our vans next Monday morning for their annual trip up to the CT Flower and Garden Show in Hartford which starts a week from Thursday. THAT is what my staff is placing a laser beam focus on right now, preparing and packing for the show. I will be holed up in my home office as I am giving two talks at the flower show. The first is on monarch butterflies. The second is on growing as much food as possible in your yard.



Chives are one of the easiest perennial herbs to grow. The flowers are edible and the plants look great edging a garden.

After that, we will be offering an all-new educational event: A Landscape for All Creatures. Saturday, February 27th will be devoted to teaching you how to create a yard that is welcoming to birds, wildlife, pollinators, butterflies,



Did you know that borage has edible flowers? It is also a healing herb as well as an important plant for pollinators. Learn all about how easy it is to grow in this Saturday's workshop.

hummingbirds, and... you! It will be a series of 6 mini-classes, each 3/4 hour long, with lots of great handouts and books for sale. [Click here](#) to go directly to our website where you can see the entire class lineup and even register for classes on line.

Along with preparing for classes, I am thrilled to have seven landscape design projects during the winter months. Working at home on my drawing board while watching the birds at the feeder outside of

my window is a pretty nice job description, wouldn't you say? Designing and teaching go hand in hand, and both help me to improve my plant knowledge as well as hone my skills. This is my 33rd year of this rewarding winter work.

Buried beneath all the snow lie our hopes and dreams for all of the flowers, herbs, fruits, and vegetables that we will grow and enjoy until the snow returns next December. Take advantage of this indoor time and study up on some new ways to enhance your surroundings. I have been deeply engrossed in studying many books, including *Attracting Native Pollinators* and three books on the European design style of Piet Oudolf. After visiting The High Line in New York City last summer, I was convinced that landscaping with broad masses of native grasses, bold perennials, and select flowering trees and shrubs is exactly what I aspire to in my own yard. With nearly a quarter of an acre of newly cleared land (the hillside formerly know as my bittersweet nightmare), I have the perfect opportunity to paint my property with the same bold strokes. Stay tuned, this is a ten year project in its infancy!



The view from my deck in May.

I hope to see you this Saturday, and then at the flower show in Hartford after that. Grab a gang of like-minded gardening friends, or perhaps introduce some of your friends to the magic of gardening, and you will melt away the winter blues. I guarantee it!

See you soon...

Nancy

A Superfruit you May not Know About

Last Saturday, I was thrilled to speak to a large group at the CT Horticultural Society's Winter Symposium. My talk focused on Plants with a Purpose, a theme that you will see woven into absolutely everything we will be doing this year at Natureworks. I discussed the ecological functions of plants, inspired by the teachings in the book *The Living Landscape* by two of my favorite authors: Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy. Ecological functions include food for birds, nesting/shelter sites for wildlife, pollinator plants, larval and nectar food plants for butterflies, nectar plants for hummingbirds, plants that stop erosion, plants that feed the soil... you get the picture.

My final category was plants that serve MULTIPLE



purposes. Elderberries topped the list, as they have a very healthy fruit, beloved by birds and humans alike. Their flowers are edible, medicinal, and provide nectar for pollinators and beneficial insects. Their stems have a soft, pithy exterior and are used by tunnel nesting native bees to lay their eggs over the winter.

The OTHER native shrub that I focused on that has multiple ecological benefits is one that you may not be as familiar with: *Aronia melanocarpa*, black chokeberry. For years, I have sold mainly the red berried form of Aronia as the fruit is so showy, it is easy to sell in the fall. Having seen a large stand of black chokeberry growing wild on one of the Thimble Islands, I was intrigued. We started stocking this plant and, much to my surprise, my staff displayed it with the rest of the fruiting plants. And people bought it because they knew something I wasn't yet aware of: this plant produced a fruit that has more antioxidants than elderberries! I went to the local health food store to buy a bottle of my regular organic morning juice blend, and lo and behold, there was Aronia juice on the shelves.

This plant is also a great habitat plant, forming a thicket that will shelter the birds, provide a home for wildlife in the winter, and offer fruit to the birds (if you don't pick it first). The lesson learned is that when you are trying to decide what to plant in your yard this year, keep the ecological contribution of the plant in mind. And always consider edible landscaping as a way to increase the food you grow while also making your yard a lot prettier.

What Vegetable Can I Grow in Partial Shade?



I asked my staff what kinds of questions people were asking on Seedy Sunday. One of the most asked questions was "What can I grow if I don't have full sun?" I will be honest. You cannot grow tomatoes in partial shade, nor will you have much success with peppers and eggplants. They are tropical plants, native to Central and South America and will languish in partial shade. I remember when I had my cottage at the beach, set on a rocky hillside within a mossy, hickory woods. I had ONE sunny spot, on my deck. Actually, that sunny spot moved throughout the day.

When I was working from home on the drawing board, I would literally MOVE my tomato in a pot from sunbeam to sunbeam. That is not the ideal situation, believe me.

I was able to grow many edible plants in my partially shaded yard. I grew mostly greens- parsley, all kinds of lettuces, chard, kale, and spinach are just a few of the food crops I grew over a ten year period.

If you want to learn more about growing food, be sure to register for Grow Day on Saturday, March 5th. I have asked my staff to share with me their veggie



garden plans and I will explain just how to organize your yard from early spring until late fall. I will also be teaching about growing food at the CT Flower Show. Your admission to the show gains you entry to ALL of the workshops. There are lots of great talks scheduled this year.

[Click here](#) to download our Early 2016 Class Brochure.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, February 13, 2016

10 am to 12 noon **The Healing Power of Plants** Cost: \$20

Natureworks Class at Zion Episcopal Church, North Branford

Gardens offer us so much. They can be a sanctuary, a sacred space, an oasis from the busy world, a spiritual retreat, a safe place to heal, relax, recharge, think, dream, and play. The plants in our gardens also offer so much. Learn about the many edible flowers, herbs, and everyday plants that can help combat insomnia, reduce stress, aid digestion, lessen inflammation, soothe a sore throat, clear your mind, lift your spirits, repel insects, build your immune

system, and so much more. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.



The garden is my happy place

1 pm to 3 pm **Growing Plants that Heal** Cost: \$20

Natureworks Class at Zion Episcopal Church, North Branford

Learn specific techniques for growing the flowers, herbs, shrubs, trees, and vines discussed in the morning class. Examples include catnip, chamomile, lavender, St. Johnswort, hops, peppermint, fennel, ginger, rose hips, borage, calendula, Echinacea, skullcap, sage, rosemary, ginkgo, lemongrass, oregano, sage, goldenseal, elderberry, and garlic. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

Thursday through Sunday, February 18-21, 2016

[Connecticut Flower and Garden Show](#)

www.northeastexpos.com

www.ctflowershow.com

Natureworks will have a vendor booth and Nancy will be lecturing more than once so please check the Seminars page for dates/times/topics. You can stop in at Natureworks on Seedy Sunday to purchase \$14 discount admission tickets.

Monday through Thursday, February 22-25, 2016

Three Rivers Community

College in Norwich, CT.

[New England Regional NOFA](#)

[Accreditation Course in Organic](#)

[Land Care](#)



<http://www.organiclandcare.net/professionals/accreditation>

Nancy will be teaching a class on Day 3 on Planting and Plant Care.

Saturday, February 27, 2016 9 am to 3:30 pm

Natureworks Class at Zion Episcopal Church, North Branford

A Landscape for all Creatures \$35 all-day pass (must register by 2/22/16)

\$40 on the day (walk-ins welcome) Creating a diverse, organic, sustainable, and beautiful landscape for you and your family.

Saturday, March 5, 2016 9 am to 3:30 pm

Natureworks Class at Zion Episcopal Church, North Branford

Grow Day \$35 all-day pass (must register by 2/29/16) \$40 on the day (walk-ins welcome)

What the Heck is Stratification?



Last Saturday at the CT Horticultural Symposium, there was a lot of talk about the need to stratify seeds. Dan Furman spoke about paw paws, and explained how the seed needs to be kept chilled and moist for six weeks before planting. Ken Druse

explained the various stratification

techniques that he uses to propagate native wildflowers. Meanwhile, back at Natureworks on Seedy Sunday, everyone was buying milkweed and other forms of *Asclepias* seeds and the main topic of conversation among them was "how do I get the seeds to sprout?"

STRATIFICATION is simply a moist/cold treatment to break dormancy. Think about it. When milkweed seeds are ripe, the pods open up and the seeds float in the air and land on the ground. They remain there all winter, through the alternating freeze and thaw cycles, until spring when the soil warms



up. If you collected your own milkweed seeds last fall, they should be stored in a cold shed or garage. Then, whether planting collected seed or seed that you purchase from the Natureworks racks, you need to "fool the seeds" into thinking they were outside all winter. Plant them into pots of moist soil (yes, there needs to be a drainage hole and you should use a Organic Mechanics seed starting soil). Cover the container with plastic wrap and put it in the refrigerator for 6 weeks. No room in the refrigerator? Put it in the garage or a shed or another cool place. After 6 weeks, move the containers to a warm location and the seeds will start germinating. Voila!

Quick Links Buttons

[Our Website](#)

[Handouts](#)

[Landscaping Services](#)

[Organic Lawn Care](#)

Hours

Natureworks retail shop is closed for the Winter and will re-open on March 20, 2016 from 10 am to 4 pm.

Class Location

Natureworks classes are held in North Branford at the Zion Episcopal Church. 326 Notch Hill Rd., North Branford, CT. 06471. [Click for a map.](#)

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