

Horticulture Committee Report for 2020 / 2021 Year

By Matthew Weigman

The overarching theme of the Horticulture Committee's activities for the 2020 / 2021 year was a focus on developing skills in the quintessential gardening activity of propagation. In July, 7 individual workshops focused on propagation by soft-stem cutting and layering. In August / October the Committee staged garden visits, both to members' gardens, which featured opportunities for propagation by division, and to the spectacular area gardens of Wethersfield Gardens where the Director of Horticulture gave the PGC group a tour, and Stonecrop. Also in October the Committee arranged a visit to Peter Davoren's Organic Farm in Garrison where Peter and his wife Stacey Farley gave a detailed explanation of their propagation procedures, following which the group of about 15 members were invited to the fields to partake of the harvest. The end of the year saw the committee focusing on seed gathering and sorting.

In January 2021 the Committee worked with the Conservation Committee to hold sessions where members could practice Seed Starting by the milk-jug method for native plants requiring cold-moist stratification to germinate, followed by a focus on Pricking out in April. By May, members were ready to trade plants in a Swap. Altogether 15 members participated and collectively propagated nearly 325 mostly native perennials of 12 different species, all of which are beloved by pollinators.

In May the Horticulture Committee facilitated Club members acquiring the GCA plant of the year - Button Bush / *Cephalanthus occidentalis*. By putting together a group of 10 members with the appropriate habitat for this moisture-loving native shrub, the plants could be purchased in bulk at low cost and sourced from Chief River Nurseries, which offers bare-root 12 – 18 inch whips.

Finally, the Horticulture Committee prepared three of the best specimens propagated by soft stem cutting for the Zone III GCA Horticulture Show and worked with the Photography Committee to enter the plants virtually where they will be judged by June 21-22, 2021.