

The Brooksider

Published by Friends of Brookside Gardens, Inc.



Spring, 2021

President's Letter

By Kathy Kircher, President

It's Spring! And sometimes, it feels like summer! I'm so happy to be outside, walking through [Brookside Gardens](#). I hope you all got to see and enjoy the spring blooms – the daffodils, the cherry trees, the early magnolias, the phenomenal tulip display in the lower gardens and around the Visitor Center. And, I especially hope you got to marvel as the trees turned green. What a joyful event! Visit often to see the azaleas and other gardens as they break into bloom.

The **Brookside Gardens'** staff have been heroes this year keeping the gardens open, safe, and beautiful for us. Thank you, **Brookside Staff**. We are very grateful. I'm looking forward to everything becoming a bit easier. And, I am hopeful that we can get back to more normal this summer.

This year, **we are celebrating [FOBG's 25th Anniversary](#)**. Thank you, **Joan O'Rourke**, and everyone who was a charter member in 1996! And a special **Thank You** to you, our members. You have made it possible for us to support and be active advocates for **Brookside Gardens** for 25 years. Be sure to read the **FOBG** history article later in the newsletter. We selected the Iris as a symbol of our 25th year. With a meaning of hope and trust, the Iris is the flower to send when you want to say thank you to a friend, and we want to thank all of you. As part of our celebration, we had two signature drinks that celebrated garden herbs: The Friends 25 – Gin Cocktail and The Garden Fizz – Rosemary Mocktail. Thank you, **Kelley**

Heim for developing these for us. See the article by **Barbara Schwarz and Nithya Raghavan** for the recipes.

A year ago, I was writing my first President's Letter for **The Brooksider**. Now, I'm wondering where the year went. **FOBG** has been very busy this year, adapting and learning new things along the way. Like you, we all learned to use the internet more than ever, holding Board and committee meetings via Zoom, working with **Brookside**, and having events online. **Most important, we:** 1) sold a limited edition T-shirt to raise funds, 2) had our first online plant sale with an amazing online store developed by **Nithya Raghavan** and her husband **Peter Fitzgerald**, 3) supported **Art in the Garden**, which transitioned to an online art show for local high school students, 4) supported the **Hip Hop Architecture camp**, a program to introduce underrepresented youth to architecture, urban planning, and design, 5) executed the October membership renewal mailing while working from home, 6) held a year-end fundraising appeal, and 7) organized our first [Membership Appreciation webinar](#)!

We are now busy planning and working on our **September Fall Plant Sale**. **FOBG** has had a Fall Plant Sale every year for the past 25 years. Remember, fall is the best time to plant perennials and shrubs. Watch for the announcement of our **special 25th Anniversary Plant!**

News from Brookside

By Stephanie Oberle, Director, Brookside Gardens

[Brookside Gardens](#) has always been a place for people to come and relax, regroup and recharge. With COVID-19, that community need has been amplified, along with a growing understanding that gardens and green spaces are not a nicety, they are a necessity to our physical and mental well-being. In talking to folks visiting the **Garden**, it became clear that county residents were specifically seeking out the **Gardens** as a place to process the collective trauma caused by COVID-19. And some of that trauma was caused by the loss of loved ones, the inability to gather for family milestones, and the uncertainty of the future. Being able to come to a public garden like **Brookside Gardens** not only offers the healing benefits of nature, but is a way to maintain social connections to our neighbors, even when we have to stay six feet apart.

So, the **Crystal Installation** is a way for all of us to process our grief, whether personally or collectively. And by installing one strand of crystals for each person who was lost to COVID-19, it gives a visual cue to the enormity of loss. It's easy to read a number on a paper: 1,515. But what does that mean? When you see all the crystals suspended, you get a feeling of how

big that number is. And the number is growing. Every two weeks, we add more crystals to reflect current data. This is the "**Facets of Hope**" exhibit.

As to the logistics of creating the exhibit, the crystals were purchased from vendors on Etsy and Ebay. Because of our commitment to sustainable practices, we liked the idea of repurposing vintage crystals, rather than buying new. It was also an opportunity to support small businesses. An unexpected benefit was that we received a wide variety of crystals, a diversity which lends to the beauty and interest of the exhibit. Approximately 20 staff and volunteers worked for a week to prepare the crystals and suspend them in the garden.

The **Wisteria Arbor** seemed like a perfect place for the exhibit because it is paved, is in a favorite location (the Rose Garden), and the crystals are low enough to be seen but (mostly) high enough that people can't touch them. There are many benches, which gives people a place to sit, slow down, enjoy the beauty of the gardens, and reflect. Feedback has been positive, with much gratitude for acknowledging our community's loss in such a beautiful way.



Member Appreciation Event

By Barbara Schwarz and Nithya Raghavan



There was glitz, there was glitter, there were speeches, there were cocktails – **ALL VIRTUALLY** – on that very special afternoon of April 18! **Kathy Kircher, FOBG President**, hosted our first webinar for **FOBG** members with a memorable afternoon celebrating **FOBG's 25th** anniversary. The response was the largest in years, with approximately 167 members in attendance. Everyone wanted to hear what was happening with **FOBG**, with **Brookside Gardens** and with **Montgomery County Parks** during this unusual year of the pandemic.

The program started with a wonderful video from **Nithya Raghavan, FOBG** webmaster and webinar coordinator,



highlighting 25 years of **FOBG**. It was a walk down memory lane of people, events and fundraising activities of **FOBG**. What a pictorial summation of so many years!

Since it was titled '**A Leap of Faith**', we heard from our own **Joan O'Rourke** who delved into some of the history of the founding of **FOBG** 25 years ago in 1996 and the adventure in forming this nonprofit group to support **Brookside Gardens**. One of the speakers, **David Vismara**, the director of **Brookside** while

FOBG was being formed, expressed his experiences in helping the group of volunteers realize their vision. A wonderful partnership was thus formed!

Other speakers included **Stephanie Oberle**, current **Director of Brookside Gardens** and **Phil Normandy, Plant Collections manager** extraordinaire of **Brookside Gardens** for the past 40 years. Their talks included great information on **Brookside** and the many programs that functioned even during the pandemic. **Brookside** also faced a budget cut at the same time that the gardens saw the highest influx of visitors! It has been a challenge like no other.

Mike Riley (Director, Montgomery Parks) gave us a very interesting presentation on managing all the county parks during Covid. He showed us how they met the challenge to keep parks open and functioning during a time of overwhelming shutdown, social distancing and worry.

On a lighter side, **Kelley Heim**, a **Brookside** horticulturist, gave us an enthusiastic mixology demonstration on preparing a cocktail (*Friends 25*) and mocktail (*Garden Fizz*) – both signature drinks crafted for this celebration – using herbs from the garden, which we were inspired to make and indulge ourselves!

Interspersed throughout the meeting were wonderful videos of congratulations from **Katie Rictor**, (**Executive Director, Montgomery Parks Foundation**), and from our **county executive Marc Elrich** and **council members Tom Hucker, Evan Glass, Andrew Friedson, Will Jawando, Hans Riemer, and Nancy Navarro**. What an important group of supporters for **Brookside**!

If you were among the first 120 members to register for the meeting, we hope you enjoy your commemorative mug which the **FOBG board** so happily delivered!

Our gratitude to **Nithya Raghavan** assisted by **Peter FitzGerald**, for all their hard work in producing this webinar. We could not have had this without their expertise and persistence to have a perfect presentation. Also, thanks to all the **FOBG** Board members who helped to make this a successful event!

Last, a **BIG THANK YOU** to all **FOBG** members for your loyalty to and support of **Friends of Brookside Gardens** over these past 25 years! Here is to another 25 years and more of support for the gardens we all love!

COCKTAILS WITH KELLEY

Signature drinks specially designed for FOBG

FRIENDS 25 : GIN COCKTAIL

- 8-12 Mint Leaves
- 2oz Fresh Lemon Juice (about 1 lemon)
- 1T Honey
- 1oz Gin
- Cucumber or Plain Sparkling Club Soda
- Mint and sliced cucumber for garnish

In a shaker, muddle mint leaves, fresh lemon juice, and honey for about 30 seconds. Strain and pour into glass and add ice. Pour in 1oz of preferred gin. Top off with cucumber flavored or regular club soda and gently stir. Garnish with mint and sliced cucumbers.



FRIENDS 25

GARDEN FIZZ



GARDEN FIZZ : ROSEMARY MOCKTAIL

- 8-12 Blueberries
- 1 Sprig Rosemary (about 4")
- 1T Honey
- 1oz Fresh Lemon Juice (about ½ lemon)
- Sparkling Club Soda
- Rosemary & Blueberries for Garnish

In a shaker, muddle the blueberries, rosemary leaves sans the woody stem, and 1 tablespoon of honey for about 30 seconds. Add the 1oz of fresh lemon juice and stir. Strain and pour into your favorite glass and add ice. Top with sparkling club soda, and garnish with rosemary and blueberries.

FOBG AT TWENTY-FIVE: Interview with the Founder, Joan O'Rourke

By Joe Ann Stenstrom, FOBG member

I had the privilege of speaking with **Joan O'Rourke** about the beginnings of the [Friends of Brookside Gardens \(FOBG\)](#) without whom this dynamic organization would not have existed. In a delightful interview, she answered the following questions with her infectious enthusiasm. The words are paraphrases of her answers to each of the questions.

How did you come to establish the Friends of Brookside Garden?

Retired and looking for some meaningful volunteer activity in the late 1960's, **Joan** responded to an advertisement for volunteers to work with the children's program at **Brookside** that presented classes on plants and gardens for elementary school aged children taught by staff members and followed by a tour of the gardens to observe what had been taught. At the time this was the only volunteer activity provided by **Brookside**. Later at Christmas time, **Joan** volunteered to help assemble the large wreath that hung at the entrance to the Conservatory. Within a short time, she was helping in the greenhouse, eventually working there five days a week. During this time, she learned much about plants and gardening and became a **Master Gardener**. Working with other volunteers in the Children's Program, she began talking about the possibility of starting a group to help fund the **Gardens**. Together with **Sally Moran, Bob Alde, Betty Bieberly, Marsha Postman** and others, she approached the Director about establishing such an organization.

What was the reaction to your proposal?

Initially, there was resistance, but persistence paid off and the group was incorporated in 1996. **Joan** hired a lawyer and filed for establishment of a 501(c)3 organization with the goal of helping to fund the needs of the **Gardens**, such as buying plants.

Who were the members of the initial board of FOBG?

Joan was the first president, holding that position for 12 years. Other members of the first board were **Sally Moran, Bob Alde, Betty Bieberly** (the first secretary) and **Marsha Postman**.

How was the organization initially financed?

Joan opened a bank account with a deposit of \$50.

How were members recruited that first year?

Board members asked gardening friends to join and a flyer created by **Sally Moran** was circulated.

What events did the Board sponsor in the beginning?

Headed by **Marsha Postman**, the first event was the **Plant Sale** which was held in the fall because there was less competition than in the spring, and fall is the best time to plant. Since then, **Joan** has headed the sale every year. The \$50 in the bank account was used to buy the plants. Held in the entrance to the current area of the **Butterfly Exhibit**. The following spring, an **Orchid Festival** was held, similar to the current show and sale. The second spring an auction was held with only donated plants. There were other events, such as the herb sale, a rare plant auction, and eventually a greens sale was added.

How has the publicity changed over the years?

The Brookside newsletter was initially produced only on paper and mailed to members. In September 2013, **FOBG** went digital with its first website. Later in the year, the newsletter was moved to the online website with copies mailed to those members not having internet access. That same year, Facebook was added to the publicity available to members and the public, as well as email blasts.

In what ways has the organization grown over the past 25 years?

The membership has grown from the small number that first year to the over 800 currently on the roster. Events have increased in number and the auction has morphed into the Silent Auctions now held as galas.

What do you see as the greatest achievements of FOBG during its existence?

We are still here! With perseverance in overcoming challenging situations, the organization continues to grow.

In conclusion:

Joan has worn many hats during these 25 years and contributed greatly to its achievements and to the **Gardens** which she loves – witness the Greenhouse named for her!



WHAT MONTH IS IT?!

By Joe Ann Stenstrom, FOBG member

A few weeks into January, judging by the weather, one wasn't sure if it was January or April! Toward the end of this first month of the new year, it was still a wonder. On my walk around the neighborhood, I was startled to see snowdrops in full bloom. Though most websites indicate that the early varieties bloom in late winter, as in January, and are harbingers of spring, this did not seem to be "late winter" or "early spring" by the calendar, only the weather! However, it gave one hope (albeit, not the snow lovers) that we might once again escape a real winter in our area.

That being said, these walks awakened me to the work that can be done before everything really does begin to come back to life in the garden. Some parts of the garden never died back as in a more normal weather situation. I normally cut my roses back in February, but seeing several cut back already, I came home and took advantage of the spring-like day and cut mine with many stems looking like they were ready to burst forth with new leaves. Other plants

seemed to be confused, as well. The hydrangeas were putting forth buds, as was the rhododendron. Stems of some plants that normally don't "green up" this early were bright green. Little tufts of ornamental grasses were seen along the walk throughout the neighborhood.

Garden articles in various periodicals note that with the pandemic, home gardening became of more interest during the year, thus, seeds will be in short supply this spring. Early ordering should probably be considered, if not done already. In addition to cleaning up beds and cutting back such plants as roses, planning for this year's garden is a project for the remaining weeks of late "winter", such as it is. Balcony/deck self-watering garden containers are a solution for combating the animals that make in-ground gardening problematic. Several types are available through garden supply sites and look promising. Another thing to dream about in planning.

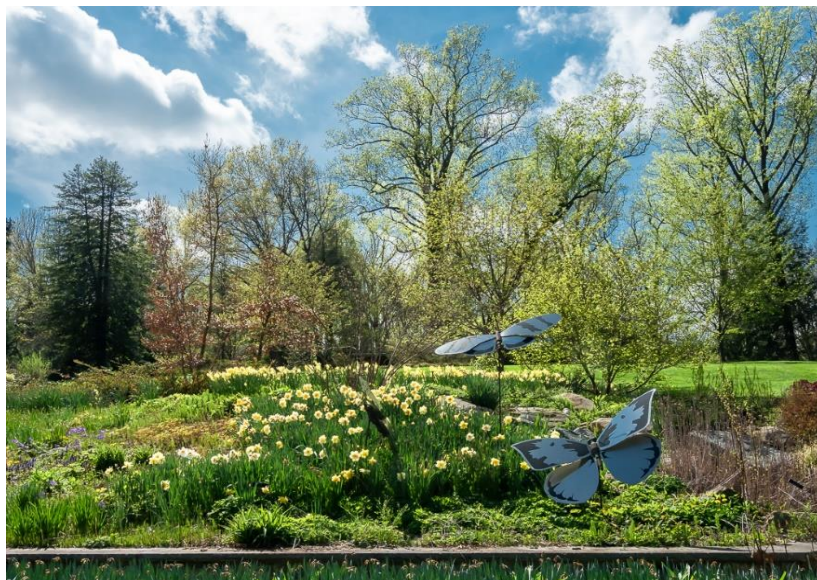


Photo provided by Doug Wolters, Timepoints Photography

Garden Guardian

By Dr. Dick Hammerschlag, Master Gardener, Howard County

COMINGLED COEXISTENCE

We, as humans, tend to think of ourselves as intact units – as a separate organism. But, in fact, science has made us increasingly aware that we actually function as a body of organisms with various functions such as digestion made possible by a suite of millions of bacteria in our gut, or maybe some fungi growing on our feet, or currently the invasion of our body by a replicating virus, etc. The point is, this is true also of plants. Perhaps the most evident case is that of lichens (well, what are they – a plant, are they an organism??) which over time were thought of as ‘simple’ symbionts uniting a fungus and an alga which separately might not survive, but together mutually benefit each other with the algae photosynthesizing and producing food (sugars), and the fungus delivering attachment, water, and minerals, etc. It is now recognized that lichens also have bacterial and even viral components (an ecological system functioning as one!!!). As we step from lichens to true plants, we have come to simply understand that plants likely evolved via symbiosis with early living forms (bacteria) combining with an alga to yield a single photosynthesizing unit that might survive on land. Mitochondria are also thought to be from absorbed bacteria. In a somewhat similar way, bacteria today still exchange DNA.

OK – for the purposes of us gardeners, it is vital for us to recognize that today’s plants are not ‘single’ species but actually biological composites. The most obvious and vitally important comingling consists of the mycorrhizal associations. Most plants harbor (well, not a good term

because the relationship is mutual) one or more fungi in their root systems (some inside the roots (endo) and others to the outside (ecto). The particular fungi and the plants do function together with the plants photosynthesizing the food and the fungi increasing the absorption area, contributing needed water and minerals. What becomes more interesting is that fungi have been around a long time – much longer than plants. Though considered as brainless creatures, they are highly evolved and able to survive challenging habitat conditions. Somehow (and it has been demonstrated) fungi have a knack for finding sources of water and food. Perhaps even more critical is that the mycorrhizal fungi from one plant will likely ‘merge’ with those of neighboring plants forming a comingled existence such that a plant needing more ‘vitals’ might be able to obtain them from a nearby plant via the mycorrhizal connections (highways). Some relationships have become so evolved, so entangled that the plants don’t even have roots, just mycorrhizae!!! A point is maybe we gardeners should be more careful about disturbing existing soil systems!!!

The concept of the above has been generated from a MOST fascinating book entitled “Entangled Life” by Merlin Sheldrake, a British author (Random House, NY). Although this article has just barely scratched the surface on the subject of what fungi can do as contributing components to life, there is soooo much more in the book including intriguing chapters dealing with truffles and, yes, psychedelics!! I can’t encourage you

enough to read the book! It is written so cleverly, thought provoking, compelling, and even mind boggling, but substantiated by actual studies!! Sheldrake seems to know all the involved persons personally.

As always, I would welcome feedback and questions concerning the stimulating information brought out in this very special read!!! Comingle your mind with it!



Photo provided by Doug Wolters, [Timepoints Photography](#)

In this and future issues of [The Brooksider](#), we will provide a listing of upcoming FOBG sponsored events and Brookside Gardens adult programs. The list will be updated as information becomes available. We hope this will be helpful in planning how you can take advantage of all that Brookside Gardens has to offer. Additional offerings, such as children’s programs, art exhibits and excursions can be found at: [Cultivate](#).

Date	Brookside Gardens Adult and Children’s Programs	Course #
5/10/2021	Flower Buds Preschool Classes: Seeds and Flowers	105222
5/15/2021	Growing & Designing with Tropical Plants to Energize Your Garden	107039
5/22/2021	Rainscape Your Yard: Session III	107036
5/26/2021	Full Moon Walk	107048
5/29/2021	Ground Covers: Great Alternatives to Turf Grass	107040
6/3/2021	Rose Garden Tour**	107800
6/5/2021	Advanced Techniques with New Graphite Media*	107021
6/6/2021	Testing the Limits: Adventures in Zone-Pushing	107032
6/12/2021	Shinrin-yoku: The Art of Forest Bathing	107045
6/12/2021	How Climate Change is Affecting Our Temperate Eastern Forests	107023
6/14/2021	Flower Buds Preschool Classes: Beautiful Butterflies	105231
6/18/2021	Shinrin-yoku: The Art of Forest Bathing	107046
6/19/2021	Common Garden Pests & Diseases	107041
6/21/2021	Summer Camps: Magical Plants and Mythical Creatures*	105339
6/28/2021	Summer Camps: Garden Architects and Inventors*	105341
7/10/2021	A New Garden Ethic	107024
7/12/2021	Flower Buds Preschool Classes: Where's the Beach	105236
7/12/2021	Summer Camps: Garden Eco Explorers Camp*	105343
7/19/2021	Summer Camps: Farms, Food, Fun and Sun*	105345
7/26/2021	Botanical Art Camp*	105347
8/9/2021	Flower Buds Preschool Classes: Summer Sunflowers	105237

* - Program Meets Multiple Days

** - Program Meets Multiple Times Per Day



Photo provided by Doug Wolters, Timepoints Photography

Suggestions? Ideas? Let us know!

Friends of Brookside Gardens, Inc. Board of Directors

1800 Glenallan Avenue, Wheaton, MD 20902
301-962-1435 (voice mail checked daily)

Email address: friendsofbrooksidegardens@yahoo.com

Web address: www.friendsofbrooksidegardens.org/

Executive Board: Kathy Kircher, *President*, Anne Roland, *Vice President*, Barbara Waite-Jaques, *Secretary*, Gale Shannon, *Treasurer*

Directors: Carla Adam, Suzanne Carbone, Carole Galati, Freddi Hammerschlag, Joan O'Rourke – founding president, Nithya Raghavan, Gloria Sherman

The Brooksider: Freddi Hammerschlag, *Editor*

Editorial Staff: Elaine Dynes, Nithya Raghavan, Gloria Sherman, Joe Ann Stenstrom

FOBG Webmaster: Nithya Raghavan



Photo provided by Doug Wolters, Timepoints Photography