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# Shore HOME & GARDEN

April 2026



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Most tropical plants such as palm trees can't survive Mid-Shore winters. So a farmer opened greenhouses for the plants, allowing owners not to have to buy new ones every year.

**18** **Creative recycling**  
Before heading to the garden center, take a look around your home, garage, shed and recycling bin. There might be some perfectly good gardening gear hiding in plain sight.

**24** **Whalen delivers advice**  
Nurseryman and greenhouse grower John Whalen outlined production protocols for seasonal crops such as bedding plants, hanging baskets and mixed containers for spring at a horticultural conference.

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**Renewal and optimism are here**  
Tulips aren't usually the very first flower to poke out of the ground, but they often signal spring is here to stay. Tulips symbolize renewal and optimism – fitting themes for Maryland's often unpredictable spring, where warm sunshine can quickly give way to cold winds or rain.

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# Learn to clean smarter, not harder

As I sit down to write this, the forecast is finally calling for 70-degree days — and I don't know about you, but I am more than ready.

Spring has officially arrived, and this winter was brutal!

With it comes longer days, more sunshine, and that much-needed boost of Vitamin D. But let's be honest — spring also brings a whole new level of busy.

Between sports schedules, yard work, and all the little things that come with warmer weather, the to-do list seems to grow overnight.

While I'll take all of that over the long winter days stuck inside, it does make it a bit harder to stay on top of everything.

That's why I've found that the

Sweet Simplicity



By Kristine George

secret to actually enjoying spring is simple: Make your cleaning routine work smarter, not harder.

### *Put Your Phone to Work*

We all spend enough time on our phones — so we might as well let them help us out!

If you've never explored cleaning or organization apps, now is

the time. Just like we track steps, meals, and schedules, there are great tools to keep household tasks from piling up.

A few worth trying:

- **Sweezy:** A big one that's gained popularity recently. It's very similar to Tody but a little more visual and "family-friendly." It assigns effort levels to tasks and helps balance chores across your household.

- **FlyLadyPlus:** This one has been around but is having a resurgence thanks to the "simple routines" trend. It breaks cleaning into zones and daily habits so you're not overwhelmed.

- **Chore Checklist** keeps things simple and straightforward for everyday tasks.

- **The Fridge is** (PAGE 36)

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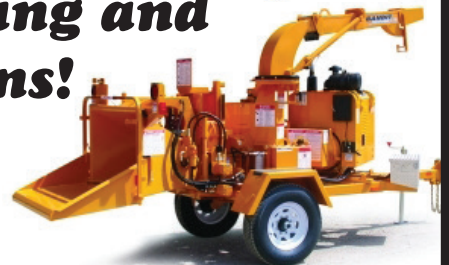
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Success is in the details for a garden. Elements such as soil type, sunlight and even fencing can have great results,

## Now is when gardeners could use refreshers

April is here and spring has finally arrived!

After a long cold, wet and messy winter, I am sure everyone is glad that we are finally in the spring season.

April is when the gardening season really gets going.

Each year I am asked many questions about plant selection for the garden and I would like to discuss this topic because picking the right plant, for the right location is the foundation for success.

Just about all nursery plants include a label or stake that usually shows a picture of the plant at maturity or while in bloom, the plant's common name and Latin name, which gives a description

### Ken-Do Attitude



By Ken Morgan

about the plant's habit.

Other items found on plant tags are the bloom time of the plant, the height and width it will grow, fertilizer, light and water requirements, and the plant hardiness zone, and sometimes even the

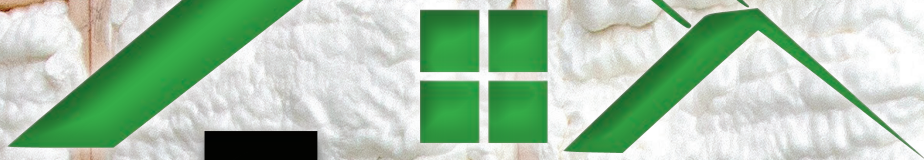
minimum temperature the plant can endure.

The USDA developed the Plant Hardiness zone Map in 1990, and it has been updated several times to reflect climate change.

This map is based on the average lowest temperatures for each area, not just the lowest temperature ever.

On Maryland's middle Eastern Shore we are in plant zone 8a based on the revised USDA map in 2023. This means our average low temperature can be between 10 and 15 degrees.

But remember the end of January this year, when we experienced temperatures in the single digits and wind chills of (PAGE 50)



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# Redbud trees are early bloomers

## Gardening Tips



By Ginny Rosenkranz

Redbud trees or *Cercis canadensis* are small ornamental native trees growing 20-30 feet tall and wide.

“Ruby Falls” is a cultivar of the Eastern Redbud tree, a cross between *Cercis canadensis* “Covey” which is a weeping form and “Forest Pansy,” which has purple foliage.

The trees bloom from late March to April with bright lavender edible flowers on bright red stems before any of the leaves emerge.

The half-inch wide flowers bloom profusely in clusters of four to 10 on bare, arching branches, creating a colorful waterfall.

Unlike the native species, Ruby Falls does not create many seedpods that decorate some Redbuds.

It is a small tree, growing 5-6 feet tall with an elegant weeping habit, so it can fit beside a patio, in a small garden, as a lovely specimen or in small groups, in full sun or under the shade of larger deciduous trees without taking up a lot of space.

Like all the native Redbud trees, “Ruby Falls” has heart-shaped leaves that are placed on the weeping branches in an alternate fashion, starting small with rich red-purple leaves and bright green



**The Ruby Falls Redbud is a small tree, growing 5-6 feet tall with an elegant weeping habit, so it can fit beside a patio.**

*(Photo by Ginny Rosenkranz)*

veins that grow, then during the latter part of summer turn from burgundy to green.

These heart shaped leaves can grow 3-6 inches long and wide, and with their alternate placement of the arching stems, increase the waterfall look to the tree.

Not only is this a beautiful and colorful tree, but its flowers also provide nectar for many species of native bees, butterflies and early hummingbirds.

Although they create very few seedpods, the ones that are created are enjoyed by native birds.

Plants thrive in full sun to partial shade and prefer to grow in moderately fertile soils with regular moisture and good drainage.

The plants are cold-hardy in USDA zones of 5a to 9b and are resistant to deer. 🐾

*(Editor's Note: Ginny Rosenkranz is a commercial horticulture specialist with the University of Maryland Extension.*

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Most tropical plants like palms can't survive volatile Mid-Atlantic winters. Jay Baxter recently launch a new endeavor alongside his wife, Jessica, to help these tropical plants overwinter as part of their Salted Roots greenhouse business.

## Farmer finds new niche in overwintering palm trees

Story by Maddy Lauria

As more people settle down along the Delmarva coast, especially for those seeking respite in retirement, they're also often bringing dreams of creating their very own backyard oasis, palm trees and all

The trouble is that most tropical plants like palms can't survive volatile Mid-Atlantic winters.

"What if we had a facility to put

those palm trees inside so they're no longer just being discarded?" wondered Jay Baxter, a fourth-generation farmer from Delaware.

It turns out he did have such a space — 10 greenhouses, to be exact — to recently launch a new endeavor alongside his wife, Jessica, to help these tropical plants overwinter as part of their Salted Roots greenhouse business.

"We're providing a cost-competitive product versus just bring-

ing more fresh palm trees up from Florida and throwing them away at the end of the year," Baxter said.

At A Little Farm and Nursery on Kent Island, owner Christy Little said she's seen the same rising trend of more folks buying more and more palms.

For her, the seasonal drops in temperature mean her outdoor paradise just becomes an indoor one.

“Luckily I have one room that has higher ceilings,” she said with a laugh.

The farm also uses a hoop house with a pellet stove that keeps the other tropicals well and warm through the winter.

Little sells a variety of tropical plants, including several species of palm trees, as well as fresh eggs, fruit and more.

She said a palm tree sells for about \$50 to \$100 and up.

“It costs a considerable amount of money, and obviously in this day and age, you don’t want to throw your money out when the cold comes and your tree dies,” she said. “There are a few that are hardy here. For the most part, the big coconut palms and the ones we envision in that tropical paradise, they are not hardy here.”

Baxter described the new business aiming to meet that need as a kind of lease where people or businesses can buy palms for the summer season and then sell them back, so Baxter can provide them with the care, space and warmth needed to overwinter. And then the process repeats each season.

“We have seen many creative uses of farm properties in recent years in the growing field of agritourism, both in Delaware and nationwide,” said Michael Lewis, a spokesman with the Delaware Department of Agriculture who said the department is unaware of anyone else in the First State doing what Baxter is doing with palm trees. “From you-pick opportunities to farm tours, hay rides, corn mazes and more, we are always excited to see the unique ways First State farmers promote their properties and products.”



**Jay Baxter’s sons, Jude and James assist in palm delivery through Baxter’s Salted Roots greenhouse business.**

In addition to traditional family farming — growing vegetables like corn and soy and raising broiler chickens for Mountaire Farms — the Baxter family has been diversifying its business for at least a decade by first growing ornamental flowers for wholesalers.

“I joke that it was like the poultry industry: They would bring us little, baby flowers and we would grow them into bigger flowers,” Baxter said. “A lot like the poultry industry, but it smelled a lot better.”

Salted Roots first bloomed out of a contract to provide annual flowers like impatiens and begonias to a wholesaler.

**(Photo courtesy Baxter family)**

When that company’s reliance on contract growers changed, so too did Baxter’s business model.

Baxter still grows those annual flowers, now for more localized markets, but in the offseason ended up with several months of empty greenhouses.

During the winter, those houses now host hundreds of palm trees of various sizes and types.

From plants sitting cozy in three-gallon pots, to 22-footers, Baxter is offering his greenhouse space as a place for these tropical trees to overwinter — and saving their owners the cost of tossing and replacing them next season.

The operation is at the heart of Baxter’s family farm in Stockley,



**During the winter, greenhouses can host hundreds of palm trees of various sizes and types. From plants sitting cozy in three-gallon pots, to 22-footers, saving their owners the cost of tossing and replacing them next season.**

Del., a rural area of Sussex County nestled about halfway between Millsboro and Georgetown.

The biggest challenge so far, Baxter said, has been dealing with recent harsh winters that have led to higher-than-usual heating costs.

He said he relies on propane to

heat his greenhouses.

“Nobody grows palm trees around here so we have to learn as we grow,” he said of the unknown challenges that the new, niche business that currently serves just southern Delaware faces in keeping the plants happy and healthy.

They’re one commercial season in and still figuring things out, he said.

“We love what we do and the way that we have diversified our family business,” he said. “The love of us growing is what drives us.” 🐾

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# Save money on garden gear with some creative recycling

Story by Jessica Damiano

Photo courtesy Associated Press

With prices for many things creeping up this year, gardeners shopping for supplies might be looking to tighten their tool belts

Before heading to the garden center, take a look around your home, garage, shed and recycling bin.

There might be some perfectly good gardening gear hiding in plain sight.

## *From food containers to lamp shades*

Plastic yogurt containers with holes poked in their bottoms make wonderful seed-starting pots. So do plastic clamshell lettuce and berry containers.

Do you grow peonies? The plants are beautiful — for about two weeks in spring, after which they give up and lie down on the lawn.

I've seen peony plant supports selling for \$10 for thin wire cages to well over \$100 for sturdier, prettier options.

But why buy them when large lampshade frames are the perfect height and shape to support the plants?

Remove their fabric and place one upside down over each plant as soon as new growth pokes out of the ground, then bury their bases or use landscape pins to hold them in place.

As the plants grow, their leaves will block the frames from view.

Similarly, you can spend \$50 to \$100 for an obelisk trellis, or you



**Plastic food containers with holes poked in their bottoms make wonderful seed-starting pots. So do plastic clamshell lettuce and berry containers.**

can let your plants climb an old patio umbrella frame.

Cut its legs down to size, if necessary, and sink them into the ground for stability.

## *Use fish scraps*

Fish emulsion is a fantastic organic fertilizer made from whole fish and byproducts.

You can make your own by soaking fish scales, bones and

entrails in a sealed 5-gallon bucket of water for at least a month, then straining the liquid and using it to water plants.

Or you could give your plants the same nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium and sulfur) by burying a whole fish or fish scraps at least 10-12 inches deep under planting beds.



**Making free lawn fertilizer is a zero-effort endeavor. Whether you use a push mower or a powered mulching mower, simply remove the bag and let the grass clippings remain on the lawn. As they break down, they'll release nitrogen into the soil**

If you're an angler, you may have access to a boatload of these amendments, but if you aren't, your local fishmonger may be willing to give you scraps and heads — or sell them at low cost.

Plants will also benefit from used fish-tank water, which is rich in nitrogen and other nutrients.

#### *Cooking water*

After boiling vegetables, cool the water and apply it to plants (as long as you didn't add salt).

It contains vitamins and minerals that will give them a boost.

Water from boiled eggs contains calcium, which tomato and pepper plants love.

You can even use eggshells in place of garden lime, as they both contain calcium carbonate.

Microwave empty shells for two minutes to dehydrate them, then grind in a high-powered blender, coffee grinder or food processor. Incorporate the resulting powder into the soil around plants. The same can be done with banana peels.

Dehydrated in an air fryer and

and pulverized, they'll provide plant-boosting potassium.

Making free lawn fertilizer is a zero-effort endeavor.

Whether you use a push mower or a powered mulching mower, simply remove the bag and let the grass clippings remain on the lawn.

As they break down, they'll release nitrogen into the soil. 🗑️

*(Editor's note: Jessica Damiano writes weekly gardening columns for the AP and publishes the award-winning Weekly Dirt Newsletter.)*

# Taste of Easton, Restaurant Week starts April 26

**EASTON** — Taste of Easton, presented by Bluepoint Hospitality, kicks off on Sunday, April 26, from 1-4 p.m. at the historic Tidewater Inn.

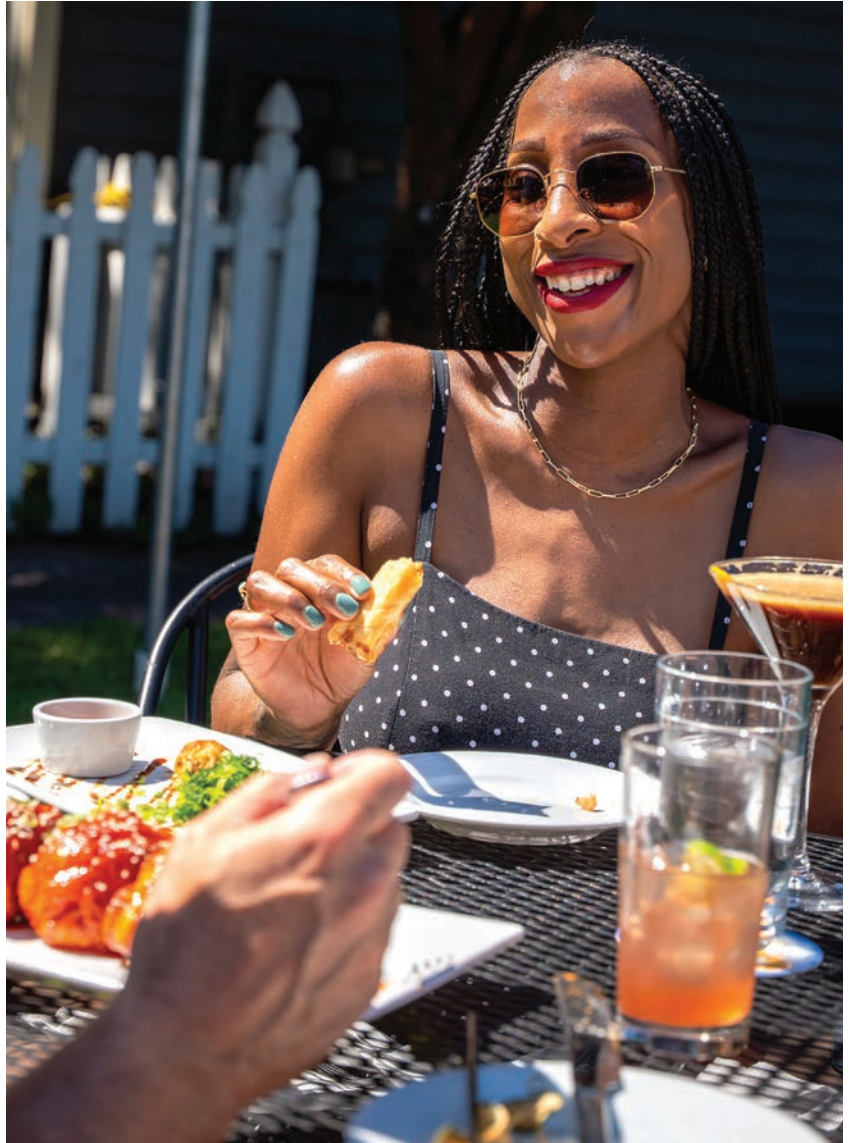
Eateries such as Bas Rouge, Legal Assets, The Wardroom, Tiger Lily, Hunters Tavern, and many others will be offering samples of their most beloved dishes, giving attendees a culinary tour of the town and a tempting preview of what's to come during restaurant week.

In addition to the delicious food, attendees will also have the opportunity to enjoy a delightful celebration featuring raffles for fantastic prizes, live music, and more.

Restaurant week will run from April 27 to May 2, with all of the amazing eateries that make Easton a culinary gem putting their best foot forward with three-course, chef-curated meals, special menu items, and deals guaranteed to please the palate.

Restaurants, bakeries, ice cream shops, and other eateries in and out of downtown Easton will be open, allowing diners to enjoy the best of Easton's food all week.

Visit [DiscoverEaston.com](http://DiscoverEaston.com) to find out more and grab tickets for the event.



# Chesapeake Bay Herb Society to host Frase

**EASTON** — Did you ever wonder what life is like on a flower farm?

Come hear Kaitlyn Frase of Vintage Family Farms in Preston discuss life on her family's heritage and heirloom homestead at the April 9 meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Herb Society.

Kaitlyn's farm specializes in cut flowers and flowertainment. They also grow heirloom vegetables to


provide the community with local, fresh, sustainable products.

The Chesapeake Bay Herb Society will hold its next monthly meeting Thursday April 9 at 6 p.m. in the Parish Hall of Christ Church, on Harrison Street in Easton.

This year, the society is celebrating the 250th anniversary of the country and it's 13 original states — featuring herbs that represent each state.

April will focus on Massachusetts/New Hampshire with the herbs parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme.

The public is invited to hear about the ebb and flow of life on Frase's flower farm and experience the community of a potluck dinner afterward.

For more information about CBHS or the program, call 203-260-9228. 



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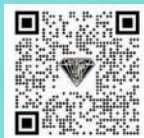


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# Greenhouse grower says how to start awesome annuals

Story by Carol Kinsley

**J**ohn Whalen, a fourth-generation nurseryman and greenhouse grower in Toughkenamon, Pa., has a lot of experience and opinions on growing annuals and he's not reluctant to share them.

Speaking at a horticulture conference in Delaware this winter, Whalen outlined some of his production protocols for growing annuals in a greenhouse.

Whalen noted there are more than 18 macro and micronutrients a plant needs in order to grow, but each one is managed differently.

In vinca, his No. 1 selling bedding plant:

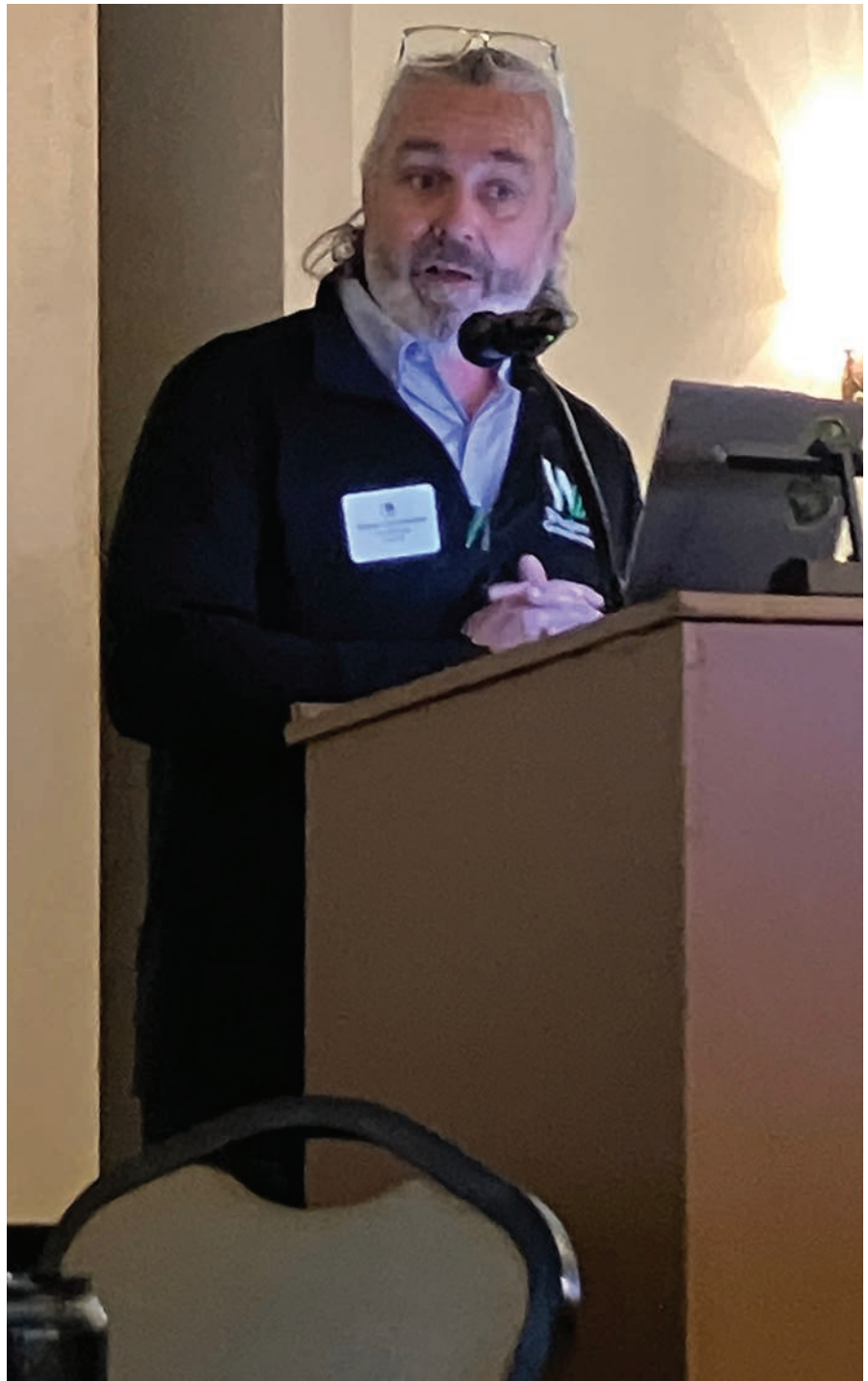
Nitrogen is for leaf growth and vigor. Deficiency is seen first in yellow lower leaves, progressing upwards to cover the whole plant. Too much N will result in fewer flowers.

Phosphorous is for roots and flowers.

When deficient, leaves will be a darker green cupping upward, leading to purpling of lower leaves then chlorosis.

A lack of potassium (for stress tolerance and overall health) causes chlorotic lower leaves, leading to brown lesions at the leaf tip and edges.

Deficient magnesium (for chlo-



**Greenhouse grower John Whalen discussed practical guidance at the Delaware Horticulture Industry Expo on planning, scheduling, cultural practices and strategies to maintain healthy, pest-free annual plants.**

*(Photo by Carol Kinsley)*

rophyll production) causes lower leaves to point downward and become chlorotic, leading to brown necrosis.

Not enough calcium (a key component in cell wall strength and development), and the immature upper leaves and newer leaves

will develop little black spots and pucker, resembling insect damage.

Lack of iron causes leaves on top to yellow and works downward.

He said a high pH reduces iron uptake.

Whalen said he doesn't put much stock in so-called "bloom busters" with high phosphorus content, High P can strip beneficial organisms from the soil, he said.

Discussing the mobility of nutrients in soil, John said he uses Osmocote, a controlled-release fertilizer that feeds plants for up to six months, when cultivating beds.

Timing of slow-release products is based on 70 degree days, he said, but when the weather is warmer, the nutrients wash out within 30 days.

He recommends water soluble products which are quick and cheap.

"Twenty-five pounds will make 2,500 gallons of fertilizer," he said. With Osmocote, you can cover 10,000 square feet for \$100.

He noted that annuals are "juiced up" when bedding plants are transplanted. Fertilizer quickly washes out of peat media.

Do not apply dry fertilizer directly to plants, he warned. "You can top-dress Osmocote, but if it's extra dry, add water."

He added he likes Osmocote for containers, too.

Annuals grow fast and can produce tons of flowers in a short time, he said.

His recommendation was to mix water-soluble fertilizer with water according to package directions and apply every seven to 14 days during growing season — to both



**John Whalen said one application of controlled-release fertilizer before planting, in both containers and garden beds, will feed plants gradually over three to six months.**

in-ground and container plants.

Whalen said one application of controlled-release fertilizer before planting, in both containers and garden beds, will feed plants gradually over three to six months, or most of the growing season.

Asked about dipping a plug into a fertilizer solution, John quickly answered, "No, that could spread disease."

A final warning might have surprised Master Gardeners in the audience: "Never scratch or break up roots of annuals. That does more damage than good," Whalen said. "It allows disease to enter. Being root-bound is not a thing to worry about."

Whalen is the fourth generation to control what was a landscape

company founded by his grandfather in 1933 — at age 15. Whalen Greenhouses produces nearly 2 million plants annually in 140,000 square feet of greenhouse space, with 3 acres of outside production.

"Everything we have is started and grown here, except for tropicals," Whalen said.

The wholesale company specializes in contract growing for greenhouses, landscapers and garden centers.

They grow seasonal crops such as forced bulbs, bedding plants, hanging baskets and mixed containers for spring, then mums, pansies, kale, dianthus, poinsettias and wreaths for the later season.





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Arich history of Maryland's Eastern Shore includes Emerson Point.

## Historic properties to welcome visitors on Talbot tour on May 9

**EASTON** — In celebration of America 250, visitors joining the Talbot County Tour of the Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage will experience an array of stellar homes, gardens and nationally significant historic sites on Saturday, May 9 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., rain or shine.

Touring gives rare access to iconic private properties that showcase the unique beauty, waterfront settings and rich history of Maryland's Eastern Shore: Wye House, Plimhimmon, Emerson Point, and Harleigh Farm. Bonus sites to discover en route include Third Haven Friends (Quaker) Meeting House (1682) and the Talbot Historical Society.

The Talbot County Garden Club, which organizes the Tour, has participated in the Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage since its inception in 1937.

Tour tickets at \$50 are available until May 8 at <https://MHGP.org/talbotcounty>. They are available at \$60 on May 9 at the Historical Society and all Tour sites.

For information about the tour and a box lunch (which must be ordered by May 1), visit <https://MHGP.org/talbotcounty>.

For more information, e-mail Talbot County Tour co-chairs Louise Peterson ([louisehollandpeterson5@gmail.com](mailto:louisehollandpeterson5@gmail.com)) or Camille Massie ([camille.massie501@gmail.com](mailto:camille.massie501@gmail.com)) or call 703-608-0477. ➔



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# Tulips regarded as a seasonal staple

Story by Sean Clougherty



Originating in Central Asia and later popularized in Europe, tulips thrive in temperate climates with cool winters and mild springs — conditions that are well-suited to Maryland.

**S**pring in Maryland arrives with a mix of chilly mornings, sudden rain showers, and bursts of color across gardens and fields. Tulips aren't usually the very first flower to poke out of the ground, but they often signal spring is here to stay.

Tulips symbolize renewal and optimism — fitting themes for Maryland's often unpredictable spring, where warm sunshine can quickly give way to cold winds or rain. Despite this variability, the flowers reliably return each year, reinforcing their role as a seasonal staple.

Among the most recognizable symbols of the season are tulips — bright, elegant flowers that signal the transition from winter dormancy to renewed growth. Their presence, along with the familiar saying “April showers bring May flowers,” reflects both the natural rhythms of the Mid-Atlantic climate and centuries of cultural tradition.

Originating in Central Asia and later popularized in Europe, tulips thrive in temperate climates with cool winters and mild springs — conditions well-suited to Maryland.

Across the state, tulips typically emerge from bulbs planted in the fall. By late March, their shoots break through the soil, and by April into early May, they reach peak bloom. Their timing aligns closely with other spring flowers such as daffodils and hyacinths, creating the colorful landscapes

often associated with the region.

Some varieties will come back for several years. For these perennial types, they will return when their planting conditions are ideal: cold winters, winter-spring moisture, sunny location, dry summers, and good drainage are the keys to success.

Perennial tulips are wonderful for meadow-scaping, low-maintenance perennial garden borders, and large-scale plantings, according to American Meadows, a national flower distributor. It cites Darwin Hybrid Tulips, Emperor Tulips, Wildflower Tulips as the most reliable perennials.

Some varieties are treated more



**Perennial tulips are wonderful for meadow-scaping, low-maintenance perennial garden borders.**

## Tip-toeing through the tulips just a short trip away

According to the University of Maryland Extension, tulips are an important crop for cut flowers, with growers using greenhouses or outdoor beds to supply markets from late winter through spring holidays like Easter and Mother's Day.

Several Maryland flower farms have events in April celebrating tulips. On April 11, Vintage Family Farms in Hurlock is partnering with Talbot Humane for Tulips & Paws. From 11 am to 2 p.m., attendees can celebrate spring surrounded by animals and the farm's 100,000 tulips and design their own tulip arrangement to take home. Food trucks will be available. Tickets are \$60 per person and available at <https://www.vintagefamilyfarms.com/activities>.

On Sunday, April 19, Dominic's Farm in Queenstown is holding

Petals and Pastures beginning at 1 p.m.

Guests will create their own hand-tied tulip bouquet alongside the team from SunKissed Flower Farm in Stevensville.

After bouquet making, guests can spend time meeting and cuddling the cows at the farm, or just strolling around the farm. Refreshments will be available.

Registration is limited to 30 guests and tickets are available at <https://www.dominicsfamilyfarm.com/events>

In Carroll County, Local Homestead Products is holding its third annual Maryland Tulip Festival April 4-26 with special tulip events throughout the month.

In about five acres planted with over 150,000 tulip bulbs, along with 50,000 daffodils surrounding a custom-built greenhouse centerpiece in the middle of the

field, guests can .

Ta-Ta's in the Tulips on April 11 from 3-7 p.m., is a special women's celebration featuring women-owned businesses, live music, food trucks, drinks, all set in the beauty of the tulip field. A portion of ticket sales from this event will be donated to Carroll Hospital's Center for Breast Health, helping support an important cause while celebrating the amazing women in our community.

The main tulip festival celebration will be on April 18 and 19, featuring live music, local vendors, food trucks, drink vendors, and plenty of fun for the whole family.

Tickets are \$15.99 per person (5 tulips included); \$ 9.99 for kids 12 & Under (three tulips included) A "Just Looking" pass is available for \$12.99. Visit <https://www.lhp.farm/maryland-tulip-festival.html> for tickets.



**Difficult or unpleasant conditions, such as rainy days in the early part of spring, often lead to positive outcomes with blooming flowers, including tulips.**

as annuals and get replanted every year or every few years to get the best possible blooms the next spring. These include some of the most decorative and enticing varieties and are often favorites for cut flowers: Parrot Tulips, Triumph Tulips, Lily Flowered Tulips, Single Tulips, Fringed Tulips and Double Late Tulips.

Spring in Maryland is famously variable. Warm days can be followed by frost, and rainstorms are common, especially in April. This mix of moisture and warming

temperatures helps trigger plant growth, hence the often cited phrase, “April showers bring May flowers.” A version of the phrase appeared in a poem from 1557 by Thomas Tusser, which included the line:

“Sweet April showers do spring May flowers.”

The saying reflects a simple agricultural truth: Spring rains help nourish plants, leading to abundant blooms later in the season. While modern science shows that plant growth depends on

many factors — such as soil temperature and prior moisture — the poem captures the observable pattern of rainy Aprils followed by flowering Mays.

Beyond its literal meaning, the phrase has taken on symbolic importance, much like the tulips themselves. Just as tulips signal rebirth, the phrase suggests patience and optimism: Difficult or unpleasant conditions — rainy days — often lead to positive outcomes — blooming flowers.



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APRIL 11TH, FROM 1 TO 3 PM, there will be a Mesh Wreath  
Making workshop; just remember to  
RSVP by April 5th to secure your spot.

APRIL 18TH is Yard Sale Saturday from 9 am to 3 pm, and  
RSVPs are due by April 12th.

Wrapping up the month, on APRIL 25TH FROM 2 TO 4 PM,  
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(FROM PAGE 6)

perfect if you've ever discovered something questionable in the back of your refrigerator. It helps track what you have and even suggests recipes before things go to waste.

- Spotless is great for those often-forgotten tasks (hello, vents and baseboards!).

- Think Dirty takes cleaning a step further by helping you evaluate the products in your home, making it easier to swap out anything you might not feel great about using.

### *Simplify Your Supplies*

One of the biggest changes I've made over the years is cutting back on clutter — especially when it comes to cleaning products.

Instead of juggling a cabinet full of half-used bottles, I keep a small, organized caddy with just

the essentials.

It may sound simple, but having everything in one place makes a huge difference.

No more overthinking what to use or wasting time searching for supplies — you just grab it and get started.

If you're looking to streamline, start with a few basics:

- Microfiber cloths
- A reliable all-purpose cleaner
- A dusting tool
- A window cloth
- An eraser sponge for those tougher spots

Add in anything else you love, and you're set.

The goal isn't perfection — it's making the process easier.

### *Make the Switch to*

### *Non-Toxic Cleaning Supplies*

Another simple way to refresh your routine this spring is by taking a closer look at what you're

actually cleaning with. Many traditional cleaners contain ingredients like ammonia, chlorine, and synthetic fragrances that can be harsh on both your home and your health.

Look for products that are biodegradable, plant-based, and free from things like phthalates and heavy chemical preservatives.

Plant-based cleaners, like Seventh Generation All-Purpose Cleaner, are an easy place to begin — they get the job done without relying on harsh chemicals or synthetic additives.

For a deeper clean, botanical disinfectants such as CleanBoss offer germ-fighting benefits without the overwhelming fumes of traditional products.

And when it comes to quick clean-ups, eco-friendly wipes — like Seventh Generation Disinfecting Wipes — are a convenient

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option that still supports a more mindful approach.

Pay attention to ingredients more than labels - I am quickly learning that “natural” doesn’t always mean truly non-toxic, so it’s worth taking a moment to check labels and ingredients when you can.

If you enjoy a more DIY approach, everyday staples like vinegar, baking soda, and lemon can be surprisingly effective — and chances are, you already have them on hand.

Of course, in the interest of simplicity, don’t overhaul everything at once. Start small by swapping out your everyday essentials — like an all-purpose spray or dish soap — for cleaner alternatives. You’ll get there!

*Make It Something You Enjoy*

Here’s the mindset shift that changed everything for me: cleaning doesn’t have to feel like a chore.

When I plan time for it, I treat it as a chance to reset.

I stay in comfy clothes, turn

on a good playlist, and just get moving. Artists like Rihanna and Bruno Mars always make it a little more fun!

And I never skip the reward.

After a productive morning, there’s nothing better than relaxing in a clean space with a favorite show.

Lately, “Bridgerton” has been my go-to. I also like to treat myself to some fresh flowers or a new seasonal candle or decor piece as added motivation!

Because at the end of the day, that’s really what it’s all about — creating a home you can enjoy.

So here’s to open windows, fresh air, and a season that feels like a reset in all the best ways.

Happy spring — and happy cleaning! 🍷

*(Editor’s Note: Kristine George is a freelance journalist who resides in Easton.)*

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# A hole from a mole or vole?

*Know the difference between what might be damaging your yard, landscape*

- A *mole* is 4 - 7 inches long with paddle-shaped feet and prominent digging claws. It has an elongated head and snout, small eyes, and no external ears. The short black-to-brownish-gray fur has no grain, which allows the mole to move easily forward and backward in the tunnels.



- It digs characteristic volcano-shaped hills in the lawn. The *tunnels* are dug at a rate of 18 feet per hour and can add 150 feet of new tunnels. Moles are expert diggers that will consume up to 60-100 percent of its body weight in insects, grubs and earthworms each day.

- *Trapping* is one of the most successful ways to get rid of moles. Several different types of mole traps. Ones such as harpoon, impaling, choker, pitfall, or scissor-jawed, are available on the market.

- *Voles* look like field mice with short tails, compact heavy bodies, small eyes, and partially hidden ears. Voles are 5-8 inches long and have prominent orange teeth for gnawing plant roots and stems.



- These opportunists will dig characteristic golf ball-sized exit *holes* in previously established mole tunnels. One day a plant will be beautiful, and a few days later, it will have fallen over with the roots gnawed off. There may be multiple residents in a vole colony, so habitat modification is important in controlling them.

- Habitat modification is the most effective way to control voles since they require *cover* and do not like to feed in the open

Information courtesy <https://clemsont.edu/factsheet>

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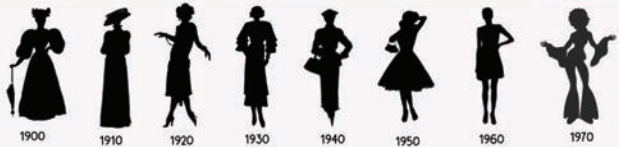
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# Try these frugal gardening tips, tricks

Story by Family Features

Gardening can be a simple way to beautify your yard, relieve stress and save money on your grocery bill, but like any hobby, you can get carried away buying necessary equipment.

Fun, frugal and environmentally friendly, these tricks can help you create a cost-effective garden:

- Use a yardstick and permanent marker to mark inches and feet on the handle of your rake, shovel or hoe. The next time you plant, simply lay the marked handle along the row to create perfectly spaced holes for seeds.

- Line the bottom of a clay pot with a coffee filter to keep soil from

leaking out the bottom.

- Use empty plastic water bottles or clear milk jugs to fill the bottom of large pots. They reduce the weight of the pot and require less soil to fill.

- To test your seeds to see if they're still viable for this planting season, place a wet paper towel inside a zip-top bag, drop in 3-4 seeds and wait a week to see if anything grows.

- One way to help prevent weeds is lining your garden with a layer of newspaper. Just top two or three sheets of newsprint with a layer of pine needles, grass clippings or dried leaves for an eco-friendly and inexpensive weed barrier.

- Keep gardening twine handy.

Nail a funnel to your potting bench with the spout pointing downward, feed the twine through and your string will never go missing. For a more portable solution, place a ball of twine inside a canning jar, make a hole in the lid and feed the end of the twine through the hole. Now, you can take twine anywhere, tangle-free.

- There is no need to buy expensive potting systems for starting seedlings. Place several cardboard toilet paper rolls inside a clean plastic clamshell, like those used for premade salads. Fill each cardboard tube with potting soil and plant. Once your seedlings grow too tall for the clamshell, simply tear off the top lid. ➔

# Women's club hosting historic Fashion Show scheduled for April 18

**CAMBRIDGE** — The Cambridge Woman's Club is hosting an Historic Fashion Show, featuring clothing styles from colonial times, the 1900s, and through the 1970s.

The event will take place on Saturday, April 18, from 2 -4 p.m., at the Club's clubhouse, located at 417 High Street.

Tickets for the event cost \$20 apiece.

They can be purchased on the Cambridge Woman's Club Facebook event page, at the CWC Ticket Office (open every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 417 High Street), or directly from Ruth Clendaniel.

For more information or to purchase tickets from Ruth Clendaniel, e-mail [manadier5435@gmail.com](mailto:manadier5435@gmail.com).

Local models will take to the runway adorned in outfits thoughtfully chosen to capture the essence of significant periods in women's fashion, each closely tied to milestones in the history of the Cambridge Woman's Club.

As each era is presented, guests will be immersed in its unique atmosphere through period-specific music and engaging narration, providing context and enriching the audience's appreciation of the clothing and the stories behind them.

This blend of style, sound, and storytelling offers attendees a vivid journey through time, celebrating both fashion and heritage.

Clendaniel, president of the Cam-

bridge Woman's Club, remarked on the significance of the fashion show as a celebration of women and their impact throughout our nation's history, saying,

The event not only highlights how clothing styles reflected the eras in which women lived, but also showcases their ongoing influence in the struggle for freedoms — both those achieved in the past and those being defended today.

This gathering serves as a reminder of the importance of women who stand up for our rights and honor their essential contributions across generations."

This unique event has been made possible through a grant from the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area entitled: Threads of Strength: Honoring the Women of Dorchester County, 1900-44.

Also underwriting this project is a grant from the Bartus Trew Providence Preservation Fund (managed by the National Trust of Historic Preservation) supporting the creation of an interpretive plan to share the complete story of Sycamore Cottage with the public emphasizing the pivotal role women played in its preservation.

The Cambridge Woman's Club is committed to enhancing the community by supporting and promoting the arts, humanities, civic initiatives, and literacy.

The organization develops meaningful projects and conducts fund-



raising efforts to benefit charitable causes, including the ongoing preservation of Sycamore Cottage, a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



## May Mart scheduled for May 1 in Memorial Park

**CHESTERTOWN** — Gardeners, get ready for the annual May Mart garden sale on Friday, May 1 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in downtown Memorial Park Plaza.

The event will be held rain or shine.

Gently used garden décor, planters, baked goods and raffle tickets will be sold as well.

Raffle tickets are three for \$5 for a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate from a Chestertown business of your choice.

Happy Chicken Bakery will be selling breakfast and lunch items, which can be purchased on site or preordered at [happychickenbakery.com](http://happychickenbakery.com).

Cash, checks and credits cards will be accepted.

For questions about planting and care of materials purchased at May Mart, Chestertown Garden Club members will be on hand to offer advice.

This is the organization's major fund-raiser of the year, which helps support the beautification, restoration and maintenance of Chestertown's Fountain and Memorial Parks.

The club also decorates the spaces with festive greenery for the winter holiday season.

Later in the day, look for the club's table at First Friday in downtown Chestertown from 5-7 pm.

Raffle tickets and some plants will be available for sale. 🌱

By maintaining an inclusive and dynamic environment, the Club encourages women to engage, develop professionally, and contribute to lasting positive change.

The Cambridge Woman's Club, Inc. is fully accessible and dedicated to providing an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere for all individuals.





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# Cycle for a cause, and enjoy great food

**EASTON** — Positive Strides Therapeutic Riding Center is inviting cyclists to its 13th annual Spring Classic Bike Tour on April 11 in support of its mission to build confidence, self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment for children and adults with physical, cognitive and emotional challenges.

The Spring Classic is known for its friendly volunteers, homemade

baked goods and the famous cream of crab soup served at lunch.

This event welcomes people of all ages and fitness levels to come together to have fun and fundraise.

The event in charming Easton, Md., includes 25-, 50- or 62-mile rides along some of the most scenic routes in Talbot County.

Visit [https://www.bikesignup.com/Race/MD/Easton/Posi-](https://www.bikesignup.com/Race/MD/Easton/PositiveStridesSpringClassic)

[tiveStridesSpringClassic](https://www.bikesignup.com/Race/MD/Easton/PositiveStridesSpringClassic) to register.

In addition to the \$65 registration fee, all cyclists to urged to donate and/or select “Become a Fundraiser” when they register for.

It creates a page that can be shared with family, friends and colleagues.

Although fund-raising is optional, it helps some of the most vulnerable people in the Mid-Shore counties.



## Garden Club of Rock Hall offering scholarship

**ROCK HALL** — The Garden Club of Rock Hall has announced its fourth annual scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 to a local graduating senior.

Interested applicants are encour-

aged to visit the club’s official website at [gcrh.weebly.com](http://gcrh.weebly.com) to download the necessary scholarship form, application, and specific eligibility criteria. All completed applications must be submitted by

the deadline of April 15.

For any inquiries regarding the process, contact [Ronnycolache@icloud.com](mailto:Ronnycolache@icloud.com), and include “Garden Club of Rock Hall Scholarship” in the subject line of the e-mail. ➔



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By Ron Ketter

## Red-bellied woodpeckers

*(Editor's note: Ron Ketter is a member of the Talbot Bird Club and a Maryland Ornithological Society board member.)*

**R**ed-bellied woodpeckers are a common bird of the eastern United States. They can be found wherever a wooded patch is nearby.

This medium sized woodpecker is a year-around resident on the Eastern Shore. They are pale below, with a black-and-white patterned back. Adult males have red that extends from their forehead, across the top of their head (the crown) and continuing down their nape. Adult females have red only on the nape but are otherwise similar to males.

If you look closely, you can see some pale red on its belly, explaining its name.

However, this can be hard to see. Given the amount of red on the male's head, some may mistakenly refer to it as a Red-headed Woodpecker. However, the entire head on the latter species is red above the neckline, and its back is solid black on the top half and solid

All woodpecker species have long, sticky tongues used for extracting food. The Red-bellied Woodpecker can extend its tongue two inches beyond the tip of its beak! When not collecting insects, the tongue wraps around the back of its skull, helping to cushion the brain.

*(Photo by Ron Ketter)*



white on the lower half instead of the black-and-white pattern of the Red-bellied.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers are gregarious, often announcing their presence with a loud *churr, churr, churr* or *kwirr* call.

As with most other woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers are well adapted to climb and drill into trees and excavate nest cavities. They have short, strong legs; strong, sharp bills; and stiff tail feathers they use to brace against the trunks of trees. They also have special adaptations in their head to protect

the brain from being damaged by the impact of repeatedly striking the trunks of trees.

Unlike most other bird species, woodpeckers have zygodactyl feet, meaning they have two toes facing forward and two facing backward. This allows them to better climb on and grasp tree trunks.

Other bird species sharing this feature include parrots, cuckoos, toucans, and some owls. Ospreys have a special ability to shift between zygodactyl feet and a configuration with three toes forward and one backward (anisodactyl, like



most other bird species).

All woodpecker species have long, sticky tongues used for extracting food. The Red-bellied Woodpecker can extend its tongue two inches beyond the tip of its beak! When not collecting insects, the tongue wraps around the back of its skull, helping to cushion the brain.

Between the start of winter and early spring, Red-bellied Woodpeckers seek out mates for the breeding season, with most pair formations occurring in mid-to-late winter. Males attempt to attract a mate by

tapping a tree near a nesting site, accompanied by a kwirr call.

If the female finds the male to be a suitable mate, she will join in the tapping. This mutual tapping helps solidify the pair bond. The male begins the task of excavating the nest. If the female does not continue tapping during excavation, this means she thinks the site is not suitable for a nest and the male will start excavating elsewhere.

While Red-bellied Woodpeckers usually excavate nests in dead trees or dead limbs on live trees, they may also use utility poles or tall fence

posts. Although the male does most of the excavation, the female helps to finish the cavity.

Most clutches consist of four eggs in a nest consisting of wood chips left over from the excavation. The female lays one egg per day, with incubation occurring immediately after the last egg is laid. Both sexes trade off incubation duties for around twelve days before the eggs hatch.

For the next 24 to 27 days, both parents keep busy feeding the young in the nest. The young are fed insects at first, and later a combination of insects and fruit.

When the young fledge, they are close to full size. The adults split parenting duty outside the nest, with Mom taking care of some of the fledglings and Dad the others.

The adults continue to feed them outside the nest for two to three weeks. After that, the adults become hostile toward the young and chase them from the territory.

At the end of the breeding season, the adults part ways. The male continues to defend the territory, often returning to the same nesting location year-after-year. He makes a fresh cavity each year to attract a mate as the cycle continues.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers are common throughout their range, and in fact have expanded northward in the last several decades. Their population is estimated at around 16 million, growing at slightly less than one percent annually over the last fifty years.

If you have a wooded patch nearby, you have a good chance of attracting Red-bellied Woodpeckers to your backyard by safely leaving dead trees standing and putting out a feeder with suet or peanuts. 🐿️

(FROM PAGE 8)

near 0? Having said this, I would select plants a zone or two colder than recommended, so look for plants that work well in zone 6 or 7. This will help in winter plant survival and provide for long-term enjoyment.

In addition to being mindful of the USDA plant zones, remember that every garden is home to its own microclimate.

This means there are locations in the garden that may have spots that are warmer or cooler than the prevailing temperatures.

A south-facing wall can warm a corner, whereas shade will cool it.

White and other reflective surfaces can increase light and heat. A windbreak, a vine-covered pergola, a large tree, or a high hedge moderates summer heat and winter chill.

Remember, colder air sinks, so low spots are cooler than higher ground.

Slopes facing north are cooler and have more drying winds, than those that are south facing.

In town, temperatures are usually 5 to 10 degrees warmer than the country.

Finally bodies of water can modify temperatures in both the summer (cooler) and winter (warmer).

Just a few miles away from the coastal areas and the more inland, temperatures will be warmer in the summer and cooler in the winter.

So in these "protected areas" you can take advantage of the microclimate you have to try a few new plants that, by the book, are not right for your climate, such as



**When it comes to flowering trees and big shrubs, stick to the recommended selections for the local USDA Plant Hardiness zone.**

hardy gardenia or Indian hawthorn.

However, when it comes to flowering trees, and big shrubs, stick to the recommended selections for your zone. This is important as late frosts can devastate the flower buds of some plants and even fruit trees.

Even though the plant will survive, you may not get all the horticultural benefits of the plant. A good example are apricot trees, as they are one of the first fruiting trees to flower in the spring.

I had one planted in my yard and almost always we would get a late frost, which would kill the flowers and we would get no fruit.

This can be true for certain early fruiting peach varieties as well, and even spring blooming camellia, magnolia and other varieties of early spring flowering plants, where the plant will set

flower buds, but a frost can ruin the flower show.

Remember these few plant selecting tips, and also remember when planting, that the ideal garden has good drainage, lots of water-holding humus (compost), correct pH, a good organic fertilizer for season long feeding and replenish the mulch cover to protect to roots and hold in place any of the additives you have provided and to conserve moisture.

The best garden is one you can maintain without more effort than you have time to give.

Following these suggestions for selecting plants for the right location and proper soil preparation will result in almost certain success. Happy Gardening!



*(Editor's note: Ken Morgan is the owner of Robin's Nest Floral and Garden Center in Easton, Md.)*

## What's behind the name?



(Photo courtesy "Tolchester Beach Amusement Park Tolchester Maryland" Facebook page)

# Tolchester once a bustling amusement park

*(Editor's note: When it comes to historical significance, Maryland's Eastern Shore can stand with just about any other area of the United States. It's carried through today in the names given to towns, rivers, streets and creeks, but more than 200 years later, their origins may not be so widely known. Drawing from "Discover Why It's Called ...," a 1990 booklet by John Dexter Nilsson, here is*

*one of those stories.)*

**N**ine miles west of Chestertown and on the Chesapeake Bay, was an area of 400 acres surveyed for William Tolson in 1659.

The "Tolchester" name is likely a compound of "Tolson" and the nearby Chester River.

In 1877, a resort was opened on

the beach by the Tolchester Beach Improvement Company, which ultimately owned it for steamers and 155 acres of land — complete with a grand hotel, arcade, Ferris wheel, bowling alley, dance floor and a race track.

The resort closed in 1961, and the whole property is now private.





By DeeDee Wood

# Collecting gardening tools

*(Editor's note: DeeDee Wood is the owner of Black Cat Curiosities, an online antiques research and sales venue.)*

**E**arly spring has arrived, and you might be headed out to the garden shed to dust off the tools of yard and garden care.

Old garden tools, such as trowels, sickles, hand-forged shears, old saws and more, are often found in flea markets, auctions and shops.

Why do people collect old tools from the 19th through the mid-20th century, and what connection do they have to the past?

Many hand tools we use today have not changed all that much since ancient gardening times.

Hoes, rakes, scythes, spades and others were specifically made in different shapes, usually with hand wrought iron blades and wooden handles to last many different types of weather and harsh conditions as seasons changed.

Understanding origins of tools



**Hand tools and garden tools used and collected today have origins from all over the world.**

and their purposes helps the collector also understand origin, use and history today.

Primitive tools are implements made before the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century. In these old types of handmade tools, a buyer can recognize them by iden-

tifying hand wrought hammered iron or other metals, hand carved wooden handles with primitive paint schemes, and items cobbled together for very specific uses for a particular problem, like a handle off of one thing, attached to another tool, as ingenuity meets creation



and necessity.

Hand tools and garden tools used and collected today have origins from all over the world. Hand shears and some of the very first pruners were used in France, to control vines at the ancient vineyards and to clip grapes.

Rakes and wheelbarrows were said to be first invented in China, where they were used on early cultivation farms and their crops, as well as hauling.

Watering cans and vessels are still found in archeological dig sites all over the world, for the transporta-

tion of water to gardens and crops before hoses.

Today, antique gardening tools are used for home and business décor, purchased by museums and educational institutions for historic display and education, and sometimes even for use in the garden.

To find authentic tools from the past, a buyer should look for patina on the metal, rusty coloring or rust itself on iron, weathered or worn paint on handles, aged wood, and signs of makers or country marks stamped into the metal or handles.

Tools that are collected today as a whimsical, fun way to decorate, or for historic purposes to preserve and educate about farming culture and crops of the past, were once a necessity for food, sustenance and life itself.

Once, without these tools, food could not grow, weeds could not be managed, and starvation would be inevitable in cold winter months.

Tools were not only just that, they were the difference between life and death.

Next time you are out shopping and find an old sickle, rake or hoe, remember not only that it would be good as décor or in a historical display, but it also maybe was one of the most important items someone owned.

Think about the history of the first handmade primitive tools, moving forward to early tools made on the first machines, and mid-century tools that saw the rise of mass marketing of easier lives at home, which always includes tools.

The rich heritage of our farming heritage shines through in the old tools we value, admire and still collect today.

They tell a story of our agricultural past. 🌿



By Deborah Walker

## Interesting choices make memorable occasions

*(Editor's note: Deborah Walker is the author of "An Eastern Shore Special: Recipes from the Heart." She has written about food and recipes for 15 years, She resides in Ocean City.)*

**J**ust when we thought we were done with the snow and wind, the unthinkable happens.

Not only does it snow again but we had a recent blizzard!

Oh well, we can't change the weather, so it does not do any good to complain.

Since the meteorologist was saying that this storm was going to be a doozy, I decided to stock up with a wide variety of foods and vintage wine.

I'm not in the mood for anything heavy, and I am too tired to fix an entrée, so I am leaning towards the idea of a dip such as hummus. But hummus and chips are not exactly exciting my palette.

## Chocolate Hummus

### Ingredients

- 1 (15-ounce) can of chickpeas, drained
- Half-cup tahini
- Half-cup cocoa powder
- Quarter-cup maple syrup
- Quarter-cup powdered sugar
- 2 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Half-teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream

### Instructions

1. Rinse and drain the chickpeas.
2. Place ingredients in a medium

bowl, and using a hand-held immersion blender, purée the mixture until very smooth. If it is not velvety smooth, push it through a mesh strainer by using the back of a big spoon.

3. Serve chocolate hummus with favorite fruits, cookies, and pretzels.

(If the hummus is a little dry, add a touch more maple syrup. If is too loose, and a touch more chickpeas.)

All of a sudden, I remembered I bought some gorgeous fruit. But fruit and a savory hummus is not the best pairing.

For some reason chocolate kept coming to the forefront. Then it dawned on me, chocolate hummus and fresh fruit sounds yummy.

Store bought hummus is so convenient but homemade hummus gives one the opportunity to personalize the creamy starter to coincide with a particular menu.

It also allows one to present more interesting choices which ultimately makes for a more memorable occasion.

If you have never made homemade hummus, you will be surprised how easy it is to prepare.

Following are a few tips to facilitate the making of fabulous hummus and understand the science behind the Middle Eastern dish.

First and foremost, chickpeas are the foundation of any hummus. Dried chickpeas will give you more flavor but there is more work involved as opposed to canned chickpeas.

That being said, there is a misconception that brining is just for meats; dried beans will also benefit from this process. Dried beans that have not been brined have a

tendency to lose their skins when subjected to heat for a significant period of time.

This is not very attractive and affects the texture of the overall dish.

In addition, dried beans that have not been brined have a tendency to cook unevenly and take longer to achieve the desired stage of tenderness.

According to Cook's Illustrated, "as the beans soak, the sodium ions replace some of the calcium and magnesium ions in the skins.

Because sodium ions are ore weakly charged than calcium and magnesium ions, they allow more water to penetrate into the skins leading to a softer texture."

The brining formula for dried beans is three tablespoons of table salt to four quarts of cold water for every pound of dried beans.

While we are on the subject of chemistry, add a touch of baking soda to your brining and cooking formulas.

The baking soda will raise the pH of the water which will help the cells in the outermost part of the bean to soften.

It is these subtle steps that make all the difference in a dish.

Hummus perfectionists insist on peeling the skins after the chickpeas



have been cooked.

This is a tedious and time-consuming step.

Pressing the hummus through a mesh strainer alleviates this problem.

Tahini is a condiment made from toasted ground hulled sesame.

It is a key ingredient for hummus and can be found in your local grocery store in the international section.

One might be wondering is tahini necessary for a sweet hummus? Yes, the tahini gives the dish depth of flavor even when one is making a dessert hummus.

## Secret ingredient is 'Uniqueness!'

*"Embrace your uniqueness. Time is much too short to be living someone else's life."*

— Kobi Yamada

Tahini typically comes in a jar and has a tendency to separate. Therefore, it is imperative to mix the tahini paste and olive oil until it is thoroughly blended.

If you have a hand-held immersion blender, this is the time to use it.

It will break down the chickpeas much better and faster than a food processor or standard blender.

The smoothness of the hummus is critical for a professional look.

If time is of the essence, and one does not have time to make hummus from dried beans, no worries. Canned chickpeas are perfectly acceptable and save a lot of time and elbow grease.

In closing, if you are a fan of hummus, consider a dessert hummus. Fresh fruit, cookies, pretzels, nuts, and chocolate hummus are a quick, delicious twist on the classic fruit plate. Enjoy! 🍷➡️

*Now we're cooking!*

# Power Family Meals with Protein-Packed Peanuts



Veggie Sammies with Peanut Butter Satay Sauce

## FAMILY FEATURES

**S**tarting fresh with a new year is a chance to hit the reset button for many people, and your family can use this opportunity to rethink homemade meals while striving for nutritious (and still delicious) dishes. From snacks to the main course each evening, the options are nearly endless for planning a revamped menu with healthier ingredients.

Dinnertime can be a cinch with Peanut Butter Chicken, a simple dish that takes less than 20 minutes to make when busy evenings call for a quick solution. If a veggie-based option aligns better with your family's desires, try Veggie Sammies with Peanut Butter Satay Sauce or go full-on comfort food with Very Vegan Peanut Butter Jackfruit Chili. Snacking doesn't have to mean forgoing your dedication to nutritious choices either — these Peanut Granola Bars can be your made-at-home masterpiece for adults and children to enjoy.

These recipes from the Georgia Peanut Commission are powered by peanuts, a nutrient-rich superfood that delivers 19 vitamins and 7 grams of protein per serving for a health benefit punch in each bite.

Discover more nutritious recipe ideas at [gapeanuts.com](http://gapeanuts.com).

## Veggie Sammies with Peanut Butter Satay Sauce

Prep time: 30 minutes

Servings: 2

- 4 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 tablespoons water
- 4 teaspoons hoisin sauce
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sriracha
- 2 French baguette rolls (6 inches each)
- 1/2 cup cucumber, sliced
- 1/2 cup white onion, sliced into thin strips
- 1/2 cup red bell pepper, sliced into thin strips
- 1/2 cup purple cabbage
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro

In small bowl, combine peanut butter, lime juice, water, hoisin sauce, soy sauce and sriracha; mix well.

Spread sauce on both sides of each roll then layer with cucumber, onion and bell pepper. Top with cabbage and cilantro.



Very Vegan Peanut Butter Jackfruit Chili

### Very Vegan Peanut Butter Jackfruit Chili

Recipe courtesy of the National Peanut Board

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 35 minutes

Servings: 8

- 2 teaspoons oil
- 1/2 large white onion, chopped
- 1/2 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 can crushed tomatoes
- 1 can whole tomatoes
- 2 cups water
- 1 can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can green jackfruit, drained and chopped
- 1/4 cup peanut butter
- cornbread (optional)
- tortilla chips (optional)
- cinnamon rolls (optional)

Heat large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Add oil, onion and peppers; cook 3 minutes, stirring often. Add garlic, salt, cumin, chili powder and tomato paste, stirring to coat. Cook 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly, then stir in crushed tomatoes, whole tomatoes, water, kidney beans and jackfruit; bring to boil then reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer 25-30 minutes. Stir in peanut butter and simmer 5 minutes.

Serve with cornbread, tortilla chips or cinnamon rolls, if desired.

### Peanut Granola Bars

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 6 minutes, plus 30-45 minutes cooling time

Servings: 12-14

- 1/2 cup honey
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups rolled oats (quick or regular)
- 1 cup bran flakes
- 1 cup sweetened coconut flakes
- 1 cup dried fruit (raisins, blueberries or cranberries)

### 1 cup roasted peanuts, chopped

In large, shallow, microwavable dish, combine honey, butter, peanut butter, brown sugar, vanilla and salt. Microwave at 50% power

2 minutes then whisk to combine and microwave at 50% power 2 minutes.

Add oats, bran flakes, coconut flakes, dried fruit and peanuts; stir to combine. Microwave on high 1 minute. Stir and microwave 30 seconds.

Press mixture into 13-by-9-inch baking dish lined with parchment or wax paper with some extra hanging over edges to easily lift bars out. Use bottom of glass wrapped with plastic wrap to press granola mixture firmly into pan. Allow to cool completely 30-45 minutes. Cut into 12-14 bars.



Peanut Granola Bars



Peanut Butter Chicken

### Peanut Butter Chicken

Recipe courtesy of "Unsophisticook"

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 12 minutes

Yield: 6 cups

#### Peanut Sauce:

- 1/2 cup creamy natural peanut butter
- 3 tablespoons sweet red chili sauce
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1/8-1/4 cup hot water (optional)
- chopped unsalted roasted peanuts (optional)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or avocado oil
- 1 1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts, diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce

- 3/4 cup peanut sauce
- cooked brown rice
- assorted bell peppers, sliced
- chopped unsalted roasted peanuts (optional)

To make peanut sauce: In small glass bowl, whisk peanut butter, sweet red chili sauce, apple cider vinegar, soy sauce and honey until blended smoothly.

Thin sauce with hot water to desired consistency. Garnish with chopped unsalted roasted peanuts, if desired.

To make chicken: In large skillet over medium-high heat, drizzle oil. Add diced chicken then pour soy sauce over top. Saute about 10-12 minutes until chicken is fully cooked.

Serve with peanut sauce, brown rice and colorful sliced veggies. Garnish with chopped unsalted roasted peanuts, if desired.

# Oxford Community Center calendar of events

• April 3, 7:30 p.m.: Jazz on the Stage at the OCC featuring Stella Cole, "It's Magic." Join Cole for a magical tour of the classics! An intimate evening of jazz live on the stage at the OCC featuring Cole, whose soulful voice and masterful phrasing bring classic and modern jazz to life. Expect elegance, energy, and music that lingers long after the final note. General Admission: \$65; VIP Experience: \$150, which includes 'meet and greet' with musicians, bubbly and desserts after the show. Purchase tickets online at [oxfordcc.org](http://oxfordcc.org).

• April 4, 8:30-10:30 a.m.: Cars and Coffee at the OCC, Sponsored by Prestige Auto Vault, Eat Sprout & Doc's Sunset Grille. Come enjoy the incredible array of automobiles!

Weather dependent. Free, coffee and nibbles provided.

• April 16-26, Tred Avon Player's Presents "Don't Dress for Dinner." A comedy directed by Angel Perez. Tickets available through [tredavonplayers.com](http://tredavonplayers.com).

• April 25, Oxford Day 2026 Linger for Lunch at the OCC! Enjoy Oxford Day and Plan to 'Linger for Lunch' at the OCC with Eternal Life Ministries Grilln' Crab Cakes and Singing on the Patio with OCC's Jam Band from noon and beyond. Free entertainment, crab cakes will be for sale.

• April 30, 5 p.m., OCC Annual Open House. Join us for the Oxford Community Center's 2026 Annual Open. Come learn more about what the OCC has to offer and hear

all the excitement brewing at the OCC. We thank departing board members and welcome our new ones too. Nibbles and refreshments available. FREE. Please RSVP online so we can plan accordingly. It's a fun, social evening for making new friends!

\*\*\* COME VOLUNTEER WITH US!\*\*\*

We always have volunteer opportunities at the OCC! If you're interested in meaningful volunteer work where you can meet new people and foster memories, consider giving your time at the Oxford Community Center! Please visit our volunteer page often to see upcoming opportunities at [oxfordcc.org/volunteer](http://oxfordcc.org/volunteer). We love our volunteers!



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