



Sproutings

Chatham Garden Club

chathamgardenclub.org | facebook.com/chathamgardenclub

March 2023

"Springtime is the land awakening. The March winds are the morning yawn." - Lewis Grizzard

What's Happening in March?

All links are underlined in blue

March 5th, 12th & 19th: Gardening for Life series at Cape Cod Museum of Natural History **Link:** [Gardening for Life series at CCMNH](#)

March 7th: [Tapping into your backyard potential](#) from "Tuesdays Talks at the Atwood"

March 12th: Daylight Savings begins - turn your clocks ahead!

March 14th: CGC Board meeting 1:00 Comm.Center - small conference room

March 19th: Spring Equinox walk at Frost Fish Creek -

[Chatham Conservation Foundation](#) Link also has free webinars in March

March 20th: Spring begins

March 21st: CGC General Meeting: Community Center 12:30/1:00

Program Speaker: Container Gardening with Becky Crocker of Crocker Nursery.
For more information on Becky's program, see our handbook under the March 21st meeting or visit our [CGC website](#) Go to 2022-2023 Program tab and scroll down to March program

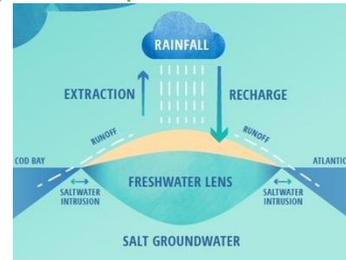
PARIS SPRING SOIRÉE: May 5th at Madonna Hitchcock's. \$25.00 pp including food and beverages. Members & guests invited. Please email Marilyn if you can help with this fun event! More info to follow. email link: [Marilyn Sink](#)

CAPE COD'S AQUIFER: One of the Most Productive?

By Beth Taylor

For the past two summers, precipitation in Chatham and the rest of Cape Cod was significantly below normal; a drought was declared for the region. Drought determinations are made based on historical data. Last summer's drought was the 58th most severe in the last 128 years ([National Drought Data](#)). While the consecutive sunny days were a boon to the tourist industry, town-wide water use restrictions were in place for most of the summer. Many public announcements were made concerning the Cape being a "sole source aquifer," a term unfamiliar to many.

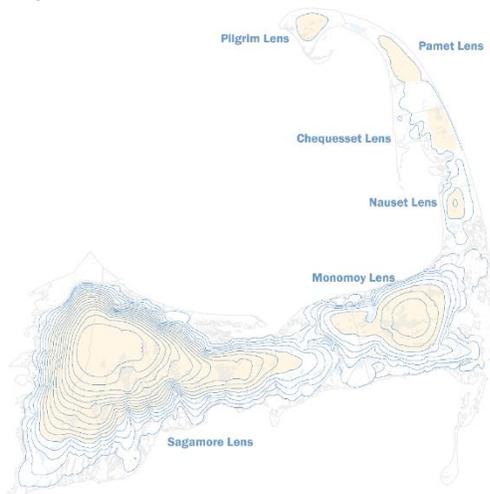
An aquifer is a rock formation that has the capacity to hold water ([definition](#)). On Cape Cod this rock formation consists mostly of sand and gravel glacial deposits. Most of this aquifer sits on bedrock, is exposed to evaporation at the surface and is surrounded on the sides by salt water. The sand and gravel particles and the numerous spaces around them allow this rock formation to hold an immense amount of water, known as "highly permeable." Because of this, the highly permeable deposits make the Cape Cod Aquifer one of the most productive groundwater systems in New England ([CC Commission](#)). Fortunately for Cape residents, this means that there is a large source of water in the Cape Cod aquifer, even in years of less rain. *Source: CC Guardian*



Following the federal Clean Water Act of 1948 (amended in 1973) the Environmental Protection Agency, charged with enforcing pollution of the nation's waterways, defined the Cape Cod aquifer as a Sole Source Aquifer (EPA definition). The "sole source" refers to the fact that residents get at least 50% of their drinking water from the aquifer and that there are no reasonable alternatives to that source if it becomes contaminated. Actually, on Cape Cod 100% of our residential water comes from the Cape Cod aquifer and the source of that water is rain.

However, the aquifer itself is far more complex than the previous paragraph suggests. On Cape Cod the aquifer consists of six lenses. (see diagram on left) Chatham shares one of those lenses, the Monomoy lens, with Harwich and Brewster. Because of the shape of the land and the pressure from the salt water surrounding the Cape, the aquifer is deepest at the Harwich/Chatham town-line and is shallowest close to the shore. Chatham's town wells are all located in the deepest part of this aquifer lens ([town well map](#)). The wells function like long straws, sucking the water out of the aquifer from

the area surrounding them. Private wells function the same way with little impact on the aquifer.



This past summer there was an emergency water situation in Chatham. However, at no point did public officials state that the problem was due to a lack of water in the aquifer. The officials did state that the town wells could not keep up with the water use in the town. High temperatures caused the pumps on the wells to shut off rather than overheat, thus reducing the availability of town-supplied water. All water conservation measures throughout the town that reduced the **use of town-supplied water** helped to avert an actual emergency.

Water is a limited resource on Earth but it is unlikely that it will be limiting here due to the capacity of the Cape Cod aquifer. However, reducing any natural resource always makes sense. Irrigation uses 5-10 gallons of water/min. If irrigating, consider switching to drip when possible (30-50% less water), mulch everywhere, choose drought tolerant plants, only irrigate to 1"/week and reduce the lawn. Beyond reducing outdoor irrigation, shorten showers (5 gal/min); turn tap off when hand-washing dishes, brushing teeth, shaving (5 gal/min); replace older toilet models with water efficient ones (5 gal/flush vs. 1.6 gal/flush); use dishwashers (15 gal./use) and washing machines (15-30 gal/use) only with full loads (CC Groundwater Guardians). Reducing personal town-supplied water use here in Chatham will not help those suffering desertification in another part of the world, but it will help avert a town-wide disaster if the town wells can't keep up with demand another summer.

Garden Club Scholarship Recipient: Amy Hinesley from Chatham was awarded the \$2500 Garden Club Scholarship in January. Amy attends Cornell University and majors in Environmental Science. Our scholarship was first started in 1974 and the recipient of our scholarship is awarded this "continuing education" scholarship after completing one or more years of college and be in good academic standing. Recipients need to be majoring in horticulture, landscaping, landscape design, environmental science, ecology, conservation or a related field. Marilyn also has an update on our \$1,000 Grantsmanship award that we will share in a future Sproutings edition.

If you need a ride to one of our general meetings, or know of someone who does, please email [Donna's email](#) (hit link)

Earth Day - Saturday, April 22, 2023 Chatham Conservation Foundation has reached out to environmental groups such as Friends of Trees and Chatham Garden Club to join them in public events planned throughout the week! ***Stay tuned for details!***

New member Suzanne Feeney with Kit



Photo by Jen Stello



Trending now is “Leca”. Leca is a growing medium, used in place of soil to grow your houseplants. Leca are little balls of clay and it stands for ‘Lightweight expanded clay aggregate’. These clay balls reduce the risk of over-watering because the little clay balls deliver moisture to the roots, and helps reduce insects on your plants. I have read you need to add a liquid (hydroponic) nutrient. **Links:**

House Plant Problems:

Scale: Scale insects on plants look like small brown or cream-colored bumps that are easily mistaken for plant growth. Scale bugs are plant pests with round or oval shape and range in size from minuscule dots to large lumps. When scales reach adulthood, they don't move on plants, making them hard to identify. *(from leafyplace.com)*

Mealybugs: "These nasty little houseplant pests crawl on plants leaving a cottony-wool like substance behind. Mealybugs also secrete honeydew and cause sooty mold." *(from leafyplace.com)*



Scale:

Mealy bugs



Solutions: Go Organic! Horticultural Oil, Neem Oil or Insecticidal Soap. Look for organic products, like Bonide Organic. There are also recipes for homemade neem oil/horticultural oil on-line (just Google them!).

From Garden Design magazine: [Common Household Pests](#)

What is Air Layering? It's a way to propagate plants. This month we focus on house plants - in a future Sproutings we will talk about Air Layering for outdoor woody plants [Air Layering for Houseplants](#) *from Better Homes & Gardens*

On a warm day in March:

Although the calendar shows Spring begins this month, all of us Cape Codders know differently! But, if we have a warm day or two this month, and you haven't already done so, you can do some of these things: Cut down ornamental grasses to about six to ten inches; prune your butterfly bush down to 12-18 inches; prune your rose of sharon; prune needle-bearing evergreen shrubs (wait on any spring blooming shrubs until after

they bloom, ie rhododendrons, azaleas, lilacs, etc.) shrubs or plants that bloom on new growth/wood [New Wood vs. Old Wood Hydrangeas](#) . Get a free soil test: [Soil Test](#)

March is Women's History Month. It is a celebration of women's contributions to history, culture and society and has been observed annually in the month of March in the United States since 1987. In honor of all women, I chose to pen an article about two famous historic female gardeners in Massachusetts:

Two Famous Gardens designed by women in Massachusetts

By Donna Maiocca

Although the first name that came to mind as a famous female gardener would, to me, have to be Gertrude Jekyll. Although Ms. Jekyll did design three gardens in the United State - two in Connecticut and one in Ohio, she never visited the US. Her countless magazine articles were read by many Americans and she has been described as "a premier influence in garden design" by British and American gardening enthusiasts, and received awards from various American garden societies, including one from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Although there are countless famous women gardeners and garden designers in the US, I want to focus on two more local women - gardens you can visit on a day trip from Chatham.

Moving on to Women from Massachusetts that contributed to the Horticulture scene, I have chosen Isabella Stewart Gardner and Edith Wharton. Although neither woman was born in Massachusetts nor had a background in horticulture or garden design they are both well known for their gardens here in Massachusetts.

Isabella Stewart Gardner: (1840-1926) Born in New York City Isabella was a leading American art collector, philanthropist, and patron of the arts. Isabella has been described as "one of the seven wonders of Boston."

Isabella Stewart was 16 when her family moved to Paris. She was enrolled in a school for American girls; and her classmates included members of the wealthy Gardner family of Boston. Her classmate, Julia Gardner invited her to visit Boston, where she met Julia's brother Jack. Jack and Isabella married in 1860 and lived at 152 Beacon Street in Boston - a wedding gift from Isabella's father. Because of their extensive art collection, the Gardners realized they needed more space, but after Jack's sudden death in 1898, Isabella went on to purchase land in the "marshy Fenway area of Boston"...25 Evans Way for her home and to house the extensive art collection in a museum (We all remember the still unsolved theft!) [Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Famous Art Theft.](#)

Isabella played a major role in the design of the building. Her residence was on the fourth floor. The building completely surrounds a glass-covered garden courtyard, the first of its kind in America. Although Isabella's museum is world-renowned for its art collection, she also had a love for gardening and the "nine dramatic seasonal displays that reflect Isabella's passion for gardens..." are showcased in the "Courtyard". Most of the flowers are grown in the Museum's greenhouse in Hingham and the gardens are transformed nine times a year. Her "garden" has a glass dome, so flowers are always in bloom in the Courtyard but the courtyard itself is inaccessible to the public - it's meant to be viewed from the balconies that overlook it. Outdoor gardens include a Japanese-inspired garden and there is also the "Monk's Garden" which was a private oasis for Isabella for her quiet contemplation.

Link below shows the months and flowers in bloom in the Courtyard..

For more information on both the Museum and The Courtyard Gardens:

[Courtyard of the Gardner Museum](#) See pictures below of Isabella and her gardens.



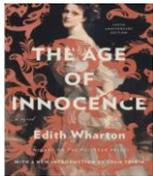
Edith Wharton: (1862-1937) Like Isabella, Edith was also born in New York City. Edith Wharton was an American novelist, short story writer, and interior designer (she later was also recognized as a garden designer). In 1921, she became the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Literature, for her novel [The Age of Innocence](#). "While living in Europe with her family, she was educated by tutors and governesses... Edith wanted more education than she received, so she read from her father's library and from the libraries of her father's friends." Ironically, "her mother forbade her to read novels until she was married, and Edith obeyed this command."

Massachusetts is the now-famous home of Edith Wharton, [The Mount](#) in Lennox. Mrs. Wharton designed the home and the gardens. She envisioned her gardens as “an elegant series of outdoor rooms, in harmony with the house and the surrounding natural landscape.” Her niece was the more well known garden designer - [Beatrice Jones Farrand](#). Today, you can experience much of Wharton’s original design for the gardens. The current estate size is 49.5 acres. Restored gardens include an Italian walled garden, formal flower garden, alpine rock garden, lime walk, and extensive grass terraces. Although the original gardens at The Mount vanished through neglect over the decades, they have been meticulously restored at a cost of more than \$3 million. The hardscape has been restored, 5,000 trees, shrubs and perennials were replanted according to Edith’s design. The Mount & gardens are open mid-May through October 31st daily 10-5. See pictures below.



The sunken Italian Garden

For more information on The Mount - [The Mount - Home of Edith Wharton](#)



[Books by Edith Wharton](#)

Somethin’ to Talk About: Occasionally we will post gardening/environmental articles of interest appearing in local newspapers or publications. No opinions given or requested - just “Somethin’ to talk about”

From Cape Cod Cooperative Extension:

“Water is an extremely important asset for Cape Cod and surrounding communities. Our salt and freshwater resources are negatively impacted by excessive nutrients; including Nitrogen and Phosphorus, resulting in poor water quality. Nitrogen and phosphorus are essential plant nutrients that are often in fertilizers and soil amendments. Applied improperly fertilizers and soil amendments can contribute to excessive nutrients that result in poor water quality. The contribution of nutrients from fertilizers and soil amendments is controllable. The University of Massachusetts has developed resources on nutrient management when implemented can protect our natural resources, particularly water.”

In this article, the Extension offered this link for more information on [Plant Nutrient Management](#) In further/additional links *in* the Plant Nutrient Management link, note that Chatham and Barnstable have required certification for any that apply fertilizer in your yard/gardens under the Fertilizer Applicator Certification link and Chatham’s Board of Health regulations under Plant Nutrient Regulations regarding our drinking, bathing, swimming, fishing and shellfishing water.

Getting a jump start on growing some veggies:

If the urge to ‘garden’ is getting to you by now, here is a way to start growing vegetables before the real garden weather returns!

From Horticulture Magazine - For several years, people have been making tiny greenhouses out of clear plastic milk jugs. To do this, punch some drainage holes on the jug's bottom and low down on each side. Cut the jug horizontally almost all the way around, so it opens like a clam shell. Add some wet seed starting mix. Sow a few seeds. Water well and label the jug inside and out. Seal it shut with duct tape, leaving the cap open. Put the jug under the snow and wait for spring. Don't let it dry out.

Note: Picture on the left below shows more of the milk jug cut off the top, but I think this would encourage our “backyard wildlife” to think they have an open invitation to feed on all our hard work! Picture on the right is from another website and maybe a better option.



These greens sprouted inside milk jugs kept under snow all winter. (The top half of each jug was kept taped in place for winter, then removed in spring.)

Why do it? The usual reason is to have hardened off transplants ready to go when the soil warms up. The better reason is to have fresh salad in April!

Thanks to our members who made us the delicious soups or brought/baked bread for our February Soup and Bread meeting!



Photo by Jen Stello

Thanks to Jen Stello for providing us with the centerpiece for our February meeting
In her grandmother's antique vase!