



# POTOMAC POTPOURRI

**The Newsletter of THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA, POTOMAC UNIT**

**Vol. XLII No.04**

**May/June 2018**

## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

We lost a special member in April. According to our directory, Jackie Dunlavey was a Unit member since 1988, that's 30 years. I don't know how many leadership positions she held, but she was chair when I became treasurer. We learned our jobs together. After being chair she became the Unit historian, always asking us to send her material related to the Unit. She was an excellent maker of lavender wands and tussie mussies. The plant sale this year will not be the same without her. She lived in Brookland, DC, near Catholic University, where she went to school and the Franciscan Monastery where she worked in the herb garden and participated in their herb sale, the day after she made tussie mussies at ours. She was also close to the National Herb Garden (NHG) at the Arboretum. She helped out at the Willow Pond Lavender Festival and made lavender wands at the Blooming Hill Lavender Festival.

Jackie liked to travel. She traveled abroad with her husband Ron, who worked for the Voice of America. After he died she continued to travel. It wasn't always fun and games. I remember her telling me that she had her wallet taken out of her backpack in the Dordogne, France. She went to herb events and was a regular at HSA Educational Conferences and Mid-Atlantic gatherings. In fact we took her to the one in Richmond just last fall. She was a good neighbor, a good cook and loved music. At her funeral her son Colin talked about how full their house was with friends. We sat adjacent to her at the Kennedy Center, where she had the best seats.

She did have her opinions, and we heard them. She was a straight talker, but she also let you know when something was a "good show." Jackie was a "good show" and will be missed.

The NHG is looking wonderful. Gardener Piper Zettel has designed wonderful beds of tulips and pansies. The tulips will probably be gone by the plant sale. Piper does a wonderful job with plant design. I gave her some of Jackie's old magazines:

"The Weeder's Digest." One had a quiz on how to tell a normal gardener from a compulsive gardener. A normal gardener orders 500 tulips and wonders what to do with them. A compulsive gardener orders 500 tulips and then wonders if that is enough. That is our Piper. You should put on your calendar to get by the NHG every spring to check out Piper's displays.

My vegetable garden is a little slow this year. The peas are just sprouting after a month in the ground. Warmer weather and maybe water helps. I did bring home a pound of spinach from the seeds I planted in the fall. It has been a wonderful daffodil season. I must have bought some in the fall because there are some new ones in new places with fragrance and there are Tahiti daffodils in many places instead of the one section they were in before. I have had bouquets in the house for a month. The cool weather has helped them last. Jackie always included a poem in her letter from the chair. I am fortunate to have her Potpourri file.

### Singing Up the Corn

The people native to this land  
planted their crops at night,  
singing to the seeds.

They called it "singing up the corn,"  
knew that dropping seed  
by moonlight into mother earth  
was joining the moist eternity  
of becoming and growth,  
joining a song in progress.

When I have weeded my garden  
and sit quietly among the plants  
waiting on warm, rich earth  
still vaguely redolent of manure,  
I feel the energy of their growing,  
the faint cosmic vibration  
humming the instinctual fruitfulness  
that animates the universe  
joining a song in progress.

Bonnie Thurston

See you in the herb garden.  
Penni

## OUR NEXT POTOMAC UNIT MEETING

Saturday, June 16th is the annual picnic and last business meeting of "the Potomac Unit's school year 2017-2018" and Rosemary and Barry Eigen have volunteered again to host The Unit, 11:00 am. to 2:00 pm. at their lovely home and grounds, 12205 Mount Albert Road in the upper reaches of Ellicott City. See if you can carpool because it's more fun if you get lost and attempt to work it out with a bunch of herbal-headed friends. Whatever happens, don't give up. Our editor will re-publish the directions that Barry wrote out for us last year.

### Thoughts on Future Unit Meeting Speakers Travel Ideas and Meeting Locations

**The latest compilation of thoughts, I see by my notes, was 18 January 2018 after our January meeting. I guess I thought to ask at our next board meeting, but it would take too long soooo, please see what you think and weigh in...**

**Mr. Daniel Goldman**, Science teacher, Rosa Parks, Middle School, Olney MD. (Met him at a Master Gardener event, enthusiastic, personable; chatted...I asked him, "HOW DO YOU DO IT?!" He's willing to tell us and field questions from us – it may help us talk with customers at our plant sales.)

LeeAnne Gelletly, MG speaker. Topics: LIVING FENCES – a friendly way to define boundary lines, provide privacy, create barriers, and offer shelter, sustenance for wildlife on your property – a "fence" of 70 possible living plants for formal and informal hedges; information on invasives to avoid is included. WOODLAND GARDENING – an ecosystem that fosters clean water, biodiversity, and beauty. This presentation addresses soil, light and other plant requirements of a Maryland, DC, Virginia Piedmont woodland, based on the speakers' experiences with native plants, non-native and non-invasive.

Alonso Abugattas, Local Naturalist/Horticulturist, Arlington VA, (Jo Sellers recommended him; he was asked to be our "batman" at Gunston Hall). He can offer: 1. Ethnobotany and Plant Folklore, 2. Nature's Puzzle (about the natural world in general), 3. Gardening with Wildlife in Mind (habitat gardening), 4. Gardening For Pollinators (of all types), 5. Habitat Value of Native Plants (and gardening for mostly native bees), 6. Herpetology (reptiles and amphibians). Lincoln Smith, Landscape artist, Forest Gardener; (Kim Rush Lynch's suggestion). Productive and ecologically functional plants working together. He

has a 10-acre farm in Bowie MD, takes people on tours, third Thursday of the month 6-8 pm. during growing seasons I meant to go and check it out. Forrest Pritchard, Smith Meadows Farm, Clarke county Berryville VA (Laura's idea). Has a bed & breakfast, too.

Button Farm Living History Center, 16820 Black Rock Road, Germantown MD depicts 19<sup>th</sup> century slave plantation life and the heroic, historic story of the Underground Railroad.

Melanie Choukas-Bradley, author of *City of Trees* researched and wrote another book; I've heard her interviewed on WAMU a couple times. Her newest subject = "Rock Creek Park!"

Just thinkin', these so far...open to suggestions, thanks, Pat Kenny

## HERBAL BEADS

This month's herbal bead workshop is being postponed; I'll let you know the date when it is rescheduled.

Mary Lou Winder

301.384.2566

[jmlwinder@verizon.net](mailto:jmlwinder@verizon.net)

## ANOTHER NEW PLANT

Last August I visited the Atlanta Botanical Garden. It was beautiful and I took many photos. As always the plants that stayed with me were the ones I had not seen before. I saw vines wrapped around dead trees, which were painted to be artwork. The vines had beautiful pea-like flowers, about 2 inches wide. The flowers were blue/purple with a yellow inner strip and the green leaves reminded me of Kentucky coffee trees. It was obviously a tropical vine in the legume family (Fabaceae) but I could not find a sign. Later when I got home, I stumbled across the same plant on Facebook only with cobalt blue flowers. Its name, I learned, was butterfly pea (*Clitoria ternatea*).

The Facebook post said the flowers were used for an herbal tea. I had no idea this pretty vine had herbal qualities. I researched online and discovered that the cobalt blue variety is well-known in Asian countries. The flowers are dried and sold in bags but one can also purchase a powder form or an extract. The flowers can be brewed alone or combined with other herbs such as lemongrass, ginger, and mint. The blue comes from anthocyanins, which are antioxidant compounds, similar to blueberries.

When brewed with water the tea is cobalt blue. However, when an acid is added, such as lemon juice, the tea turns purple. When an alkaline liquid such as roselle tea is added, the tea turns red. Apparently butterfly pea tea acts like a litmus strip, the color of the drink changes with the pH of what it is mixed with. This does not affect the taste but has transformed butterfly tea into a novelty cocktail drink. The cobalt blue flowers also are used to dye food such as custards, puddings, rice dishes, and sticky rice.

The plant has been used in Ayurveda for medicinal qualities and is now known to have antioxidant, antidiabetic, and hepatoprotective qualities. Butterfly pea is native to Africa; here in Virginia, it would be grown as an annual. The vine grows rapidly in the summer and needs support so an arbor is ideal but would be interesting to try it in a hanging basket. As a member of the pea family, the plant fixates nitrogen and is good for the soil. The vine can take full sun to light shade and is drought tolerant. There are several varieties, some have cobalt blue, or lavender, or white flowers in single or double flowered forms.

It seems that once you have the plant, you can let some flowers go to seed and collect the pods for next year. This is what I do once I get my hands on seed. This is not an easy plant to find. I looked online and found a few seed sources from sites I have not heard of before. It is far easier to find bags of the dried flowers, sold as an herbal tea. I would be interested in hearing if any Potomac Unit members have grown butterfly pea before or have seed. Please e-mail me and let me know. I am thinking of growing it this year, it seems like an excellent vine to grow for landscape value as well as for making herbal tea.

*Although a horticulturist interested in herbs and edibles, Peggy Riccio enjoys gardening so much she started a local gardening website, <http://www.pegplant.com>, and a free monthly gardening newsletter, *Pegplant's Post*. Peggy's e-mail is [pegplant@yahoo.com](mailto:pegplant@yahoo.com).*

#### **FROM OUR MID-ATLANTIC DELEGATE**

##### **PLANT SALE**

By the time this goes out to our members it will all be over. So I extend a hearty thank YOU to all who have volunteered, potted up plants, helped spread the word and all your time and talent to the effort. It could not happen without YOU!

##### **NEW VENTURE**

Very exciting news from Loudoun County the New Agricultural School is due to open on the 26th. This is comprised of growers in the county – wineries, breweries etc. Check them out at [NewAgSchool.org](http://NewAgSchool.org).

##### **NEXT YEARS PROMISING PLANTS**

Hope you noticed in the last District Newsletter that the Promising Plant committee is looking for volunteers to participate in the plant trials and one of the plants – the annual – is a very interesting sounding Basil – *Ocimum hyb. herbalea* 'Wild Magic' – might want to keep an eye out for it at the upcoming plant sales..... The other plants to be 'trialed' are *Ceratotheca triloba*; Perennial *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Lavender Towers'; *Geranium maculatum*; Tree/Vine/Shrub *Amelanchier spp.*; *Aronia arbutifolia* and Herb of the Year *Agastache* 'Black Adder'; *Equisetum hyemale*; Notable Native - Shrub or Tree - *Ceanothus x pallidus* 'Marie Simon'.

##### **HERBS IN BLOOM AT THE ANNUAL MEETING in Tarreytown, NY, June 1,2018**

Hoping to see some of you up there, I know Phyllis and 'chauffeur' Jo will be joining us.

##### **GREEN BRIDGES**

It is such a wonderful program, hoping you will consider joining – I think some of you will be surprised when you go around your garden to list those native plants that you have so many. Don't forget, trees are included in the list.....both our Linden and Honey Locust are nice early bloomers and the bees thank us every year.  
Kim Labash

##### **NEW PLANT**

I popped over to England earlier this month and found a new lavandin (to me anyway) *Lavandula x intermedia* 'Sussex'. Naturally I purchased it and have planted in the garden of my friend who lives in Hursley, Hampshire. Will keep you posted on how it does.....

*Urtica dioica* - Nettles: I've been very lucky it seems. I've been able to discipline my nettles in 2 large black plastic pots for 5-7? years. Yes they have drainage holes, why aren't they escaping?! They are in part-shade; the stolons run around inside the pot but aren't as thick and fast-growing as are mints.

Yesterday I just divided what I call the "brood pot", grown for sharing; we have 6 - 6" pots to share if they grow well before the sale; I will suggest that the new owners allow them to stay in those pots for a while to become stronger and increase in size. As I have in past years, I figure more of us are learning about the health benefits of "wild plants" each year, i.e. those featured in the book & calendar, *Foraging and Feasting - A Field Guide and Wild Foods Cookbook* by Dina Falconi, illustrated by Wendy Hollender, 2013 (eek, how time flies). The Euell Gibbons/Jim Duke/Ruth Smith people may find themselves in our herb plant sale tent any given year. Everyone should have an aloe by now, but some get over watered, some get too big and actually fall out of their pots (happened to me, have a huge Mother pot, I called it "a birth" but it was probably more like a "big teenager running away from home") so we always like to have a couple available at the herb plant sale.

When growing perennials outdoors, I always grind 2-3 handfuls of autumn leaves between my hands into the bottom of a pot before putting in soil+compost; I'm frugal, don't want soil flowing out willy-nilly and the leaves break down and feed soil creatures over time. This year the soil in the large brood pot had become thick and bottom leaves were used up; the pot had been in a propagation area, we could say, on the fringes of the garden. My main nettles pot is sort of 1/3-sunk in 2914 garden plot near some elderberries and schisandra from the GFG that are duking it out. I'm amazed that it hasn't joined in the mischief. That schisandra is the February calendar page is a topic for another ponder; did I write an intro for the Potpourri? First experienced it via a tincture in a Tai Sophia class = Wowee-zowee!

Maybe my nettles pot doesn't get adventurous because I do a heavy harvest of the first spring flush, use some fresh in an egg dish or soup, dry a lot for tea. The May calendar page suggests autumn harvesting for medicinal use, makes sense being older and, perhaps having accumulated more phyto-nutrients, like iron, "dried and powdered in herbal truffle", Ha!, I like that description of what I've heard called "herb balls" or "zoom balls", depending on, I guess, how many high energy ingredients are added to a base of ground dates, raisins, other dried fruits and assorted nut butters of choice. It might be fun to have an herbal ball workshop where those of us have recipes, bring examples and then we make some together.

## YET ANOTHER NEW PLANT

(I first came upon this plant researching *Humulus lupulus* in preparation for the International Herb Association's Herb of the Year HOPS! I had not previously heard of it so I was excited to learn about it).

BOG MYRTLE *Myrica gale* L. (Myricaceae)  
Other common and botanical names: Sweetgale, English Bog-myrtle, Dutch myrtle, Gale Belgica *Gale palustris* (Chevalier)

Description: A common bushy deciduous shrub of the wet heaths, bogs and acidic peat lands growing to 4-5 feet high; it is a flowering plant, a relative of the bayberry, native to the higher latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere, northern and eastern parts of Europe, Mrs. Grieve says, "abundant on the Scottish moors" and to parts of northern North America (An article in the 2005 issue of the journal *Phytomedicine* introduces *Myrica gale* as a native plant from Canada").

To continue with the description of the plant, Grieve adds that the young stems and leaves are very downy, especially on the underside. The different flowers, catkins, are on different plants (dioecious). Catkins are defined as an *ament*, which is a pendulous, stalkless flower, often without petals, males being quite different than females. In the case of bog myrtle, both produce crowded, stalkless flowers, the males in May, females in June. The fruit within the female catkins are small resinous nutlets or drupes. (Access Google Images to see great pictures of the catkins of both sexes.)

The shape of the leaves resembles bayberry, myrtle, or willow with a finely toothed margin. They are spirally-arranged on the shrub stems and, when bruised, the leaves and wood have a sweet resinous fragrance. For this reason, dried leaves have been traditionally used to perfume linen. Wiki reports that the resin is used to repel the Highland midge in Scotland and is used as a general insect repellent by tent campers to keep biting insects away.

Habitat Note: Wikipedia adds that since Bog Myrtle typically grows in nitrogen-poor acidic soil, its roots have evolved to have *nitrogen-fixing actinobacteria* which enable the plants to thrive. An abstract in the *Annals of Botany* describes comparing the nitrogen-fixing of the "nodulated plants of *Myrica gale* under experimental conditions" in the first year as being "comparable to that of legumes under similar conditions".

Beverage Use History: This plant was introduced to me by the book *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers* where I learned that Gruit ale, perhaps originally brought to Europe by Scandinavian Vikings, was fermented malt flavored with a combination of bog myrtle (*Myrica gale*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and wild rosemary (*Ledum palustre*) for 700 years before hops were used. The taste is astringent and bitter and the plants were used historically to flavor and preserve Gruit ale. When available, the following spices were also added in varying amounts, recipes were as guarded as those of Ricola cough drops or Angostura bitters: Juniper, ginger, caraway, aniseed, nutmeg, and cinnamon; these spices often had psychotropic properties themselves.

When consumed in sufficient quantity, the brew acted as a stimulant to the mind, made the drinker euphoric and enhanced sex drive. The earliest record of the use of hops in beer is 822 C.E. when it was mentioned by Abbot Adalhard of the Benedictine Monastery of Corbie in the Picardy, north-eastern France. His monks were adding it to their ales. The hopped ales had the opposite effects on the human body: the drinker became sedated, sleepiness was elevated and sexual desires reduced. My theory is that society in the Middle Ages had become pretty base and The Church was more than happy to see the results that hops brought to the beer industry, and therefore, on the populace.

Other Historic Uses : Mrs. Grieve describes that a waxy scum similar to bayberries results after boiling the catkins; it is used to make candles. She goes on to say the bark is used for tanning calfskins, if harvested in autumn, it will provide a dyestuff that colors wool yellow. The dried berries are used as a spice. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the tea is given for stomachic and made into a cordial. When a plant is said to be used as an *emmenagogue* (stimulating menstrual flow), as it was in France in Grieve's time (1970), it usually means as an abortifacient.

Beverage Use In Modern Times: Wiki reports that some brewers in Denmark and Sweden are using bog myrtle and the earlier herbs in their ales and that bog myrtle is often used to prepare home-made schnaps.

Medicinal Use in Modern Times: Leaf essential oil was extracted by hydrodistillation after 30 and 60 minutes. Its 57 chemical components were identified. "The anticancer activities of these

extracts were assessed against human lung [a] carcinoma cell line" and [a] "human colon adenocarcinoma cell line". They both inhibited cancer cell growth.

Additional Uses: It is said to be a traditional addition to the bouquets of the British Royal Weddings. As a wildlife provider when growing in a narrow intertidal band along a coast, "especially if logs have been washed into the estuary" on which the plants can establish themselves, they become "a favorite food of beavers" which lead to low beaver dams that may provide ponds that are refuge for fish, in which, if too deep for wading birds who eat the fish, "juvenile salmon may flourish". Wiki 2018.

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WIKIPEDIA – Page last edited 10 February 2018.

Respectfully submitted, pat Kenny,  
herbalarts@gmail.com

## NETTLES

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Pat Kenny

## RAMBLINGS & RUMINATIONS

It's a cold and rainy day and I can think of nothing more appropriate for a bit of cheer than a steaming cup of tea! (Sad for me, my local tea dealer has gone out of business, but I bought multiple jars of loose tea from a variety of countries so I am in reasonably good shape.)

But let's talk tea. Did you know that there is an international effort to make tea the beverage of choice of drinkers around the world? Well, it has always been the choice for drinkers in China, India and England to the tune of 1.7 trillion cups to 984 billion cups of coffee drunk in the past year.

Starbucks, of course, has created an avid culture of coffee drinkers, especially in the U.S. But why should tea, once the beverage of choice, become the laggard? Some people blame the tea bag (I personally have never used a tea bag). The tea bag was created 1908 in New York by a tea merchant, Thomas Sullivan, who sent out samples in little Silk bags. However, people seemed to object to paying premium prices for a cup of tea in a tea bag.

Flavored teas are promoted to entice greater tea drinking. Exotic flavors are available from Mighty Leaf Tea Company who promote tempting choices such as Chamomile Flowers, Rose Hip Peels, and Lemon Myrtle from Croatia and Turkey. A British company, Tea Pigs, yes, that's its name, offers flavors such as Chocolate Flakes, Licorice or Peppermint. The use of tea is promoted for a variety of issues including reducing bloating and relief from hang overs.

Unilever, the largest tea maker is introducing a new set of green and herbal teas under its brand name Lipton Teas. Wal-Mart is offering a 15-bag collection with the name brand "Stress-Less" and Sooth Your Tummy for \$4.35. On the other hand, Unilever is attempting to move tea drinkers away from the tea bag by introducing a capsule tea

machine in Europe which adjusts time and temperature depending on the choice of tea. Peet's is promoting its brand of "Dirty Chi Latte" for \$5 per cup and also a matcha green tea drink for \$4.20. Last summer, Starbucks offered iced strawberry green tea, pineapple black tea and peach white tea at a hefty price. New help is being taught to use fresh hot water and when to add the milk. Tea companies are trying to develop tea snob appeal such as found in wine companies while at the same time noting tea's long and fascinating history.

Phyllis Sidorsky

### MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP - Spring is right around the corner. (we hope!) Here's are birthday list.

Happy Birthday & enjoy your special day!!

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| May             | June           |
| Anna Konecny    | Barry Eigen    |
| Kim Labash      | Renee Johnson  |
| Crissy Moore    | Anna Reece     |
| Ida Wallenmeyer | Mary Schwegler |

Please bring items to the Annual Picnic for a Raffle!  
Kim Kilday

### HERB STUDY

Anise Hyssop, *Agastache foeniculum*, is the 2019 IHA Herb of the Year and a tried and trouble free perennial along with several other decorative and scented members of the genus.

Attached is an outline Herb Study calendar for meetings remaining in the year 2018. Unless otherwise noted, meetings occur from 2-4 on Sunday afternoons. Summer and autumn dates depend on host schedules. We would love volunteers to host the summer and autumn meetings; please give me a call at 703.774.6631 to discuss.

May 20 - Theme: Agastache  
At: Mary Schwegler's, 7817 Ridgewood DR  
Annandale.

Anise Hyssop is 2019 Herb of the Year.

Summer - Basil  
(Location and date open.)

Autumn - Mountain Mint  
(Date and host to be confirmed.)

Mary Schwegler

### 2018 MID ATLANTIC DISTRICT GATHERING

Mid Atlantic District Gathering  
The Mason Dixon Unit are busy preparing for us. Please mark it on your calendars. Sept. 21-23. It will be held at The Wyndham Gettysburg located at Gateway Gettysburg Complex  
95 Presidential Circle, Gettysburg, PA 17325

- ◆ Greet old friends and make new friends
- ◆ Indulge in herbal goodies
- ◆ Learn more about herbs
- ◆ Visit vendors

### WEBSITE UPDATES

The Potomac Unit website

<http://www.potomacunithsa.org/>

### ENDNOTE

We encourage all our members to help get the word out to all plant interested friends and colleagues that the Potomac Unit is 'here and happening' and eagerly awaiting new people with a similar interest. We now have a variety of membership levels - \$15.00 for the Unit newsletter; \$25.00 for an interim (trial) one year Unit membership as well as the traditional \$60.00 HSA membership. We also have over half our Unit meetings scheduled on an evening or weekend day time to better accommodate those with a customary 9-5 work schedule.

Opinions expressed in the Potpourri are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Herb Society of America (HSA) or the HSA Potomac Unit. Responsibility for the safe use of any herb or herb product lies with the reader.

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Non-member subscriptions are \$15.00 per year. Send check made out to Potomac Unit, H.S.A.

Submission deadline for the next issue of *Potpourri* is June 20, 2018. News of member and civic or nonprofit horticulturally themed events is welcome. Publication is at the sole discretion of the editor, who reserves the right to edit for brevity or any other reason.

Neither the Potomac Unit nor the Herb Society of America endorses any product or event unless the

product or event is specifically sponsored by the Unit or Society.

The Herb Society of America is dedicated to promoting the knowledge, use and delight of herbs through educational programs, research, and sharing the experience of its members with the community. As stated above, opinions expressed in the Potpourri are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Herb Society of America (HSA) or the HSA Potomac Unit. **Any herbal information provided is for educational use only. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. If you experience symptoms, see a physician for treatment.**

#### FROM THE EDITOR

Please caption materials "Potpourri article" and transmit email materials to the editor's personal address [wajda.md@gmail.com](mailto:wajda.md@gmail.com) Articles should be reasonably publication ready; minor typos are not an issue. Single-spaced Arial 10 point font is preferred; conventionally written text without unusual formatting is required. Be kind to your editor!

**MATERIAL SUBMITTED IN ALL CAPITALS WILL BE RETURNED.**

#### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| May 18      | NHG workday   |
| May 19      | Multi-unit Under the Arbor "Hops"                             |
| June 1      | 2018 Annual Meeting, Tarrytown, NY                            |
| June 6      | Under the Arbor on Herbal butter/cheese and/or tussie mussies |
| June 16     | Annual Meeting and picnic                                     |
| Sept. 15-16 | Bluemont Fair   |
| Sept. 21-23 | Mid-Atlantic District Gathering                               |
| Oct. 16     | Chile celebration   |