

Spring 2017 HomeLifeStyle

On April 22, 2017, five of Old Town Alexandria's finest private homes and gardens will open to the public, as part of the 84th Historic Garden Week.

Alexandria
Gazette Market 

PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT

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Old Town Prepares for Historic Garden Week

Part of state-wide event.

Five Old Town Alexandria homes and gardens will open to the public on April 22 as part of the 84th Historic Garden Week. The homes will feature flower arrangements created by the members of the Garden Club of Alexandria and The Hunting Creek Garden Club, which are sponsoring the tour, open from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

The house and garden tour will feature something for everyone:

Houses with History

- ❖ Four of the tour houses were built over 150 years ago, in 1794, 1802, 1820 and 1859
- ❖ George Washington dined in one of the tour houses in 1797
- ❖ A young Robert E. Lee was tutored in mathematics in one tour house

Gardens with Distinctive Design and Spring Flowers

- ❖ A garden designed by landscape designer, Jane MacLeish
- ❖ A spacious walled garden built on two levels
- ❖ A garden elevated from the street and screened from view
- ❖ The gardens of Mt. Vernon, the Ameri-

can Horticultural Society, Green Spring Gardens, Gunston Hall, Carlyle House, and Lee-Fendall House are all included with the tour ticket.

The Alexandria Tour Ticket includes entrance to:

- ❖ Five private homes and gardens in Old Town
- ❖ Tea and light refreshments from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. in the garden of a private house
- ❖ Herb and Craft Sale at Carlyle House: Visit the 18th century mansion house, stroll through its gardens, and buy plants from 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
- ❖ The Marketplace at the Athenaeum will sell clothing and accessories from high-end, distinctive vendors from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Also at the Athenaeum will be a display of botanical art showing native plants and pollinators and a photo exhibit of bees and flowers,
- ❖ Lee-Fendall House Museum and Garden: Built in 1785 and home to several generations of the Virginia Lee family, as well as labor leader John Lewis, this house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- ❖ The American Horticultural Society, headquartered at River Farm, which overlooks the Potomac River with 25 acres of gardens, will be having a plant sale on April 21-22
- ❖ George Washington's Mt. Vernon: With funding from the Historic Garden Week, the

Garden Club of Virginia has helped restore the bowling green, one of Mt. Vernon's major landscape features

- ❖ Green Spring Gardens, which includes a garden designed by landscape designer Beatrix Farrand
- ❖ Gunston Hall, the 550-acre National Historic Landmark 18th century home of George Mason, author of The Virginia Declaration of Rights.

Alexandria Tour Details

Tickets may be purchased in advance for \$45 at www.vagardenweek.org and at the Alexandria Visitors Center (221 King Street). On the date of the tour, they may be purchased for \$55 at any house on the tour or at the Alexandria Visitor's Center. Group tours of 20 people or more, \$40 per person. Single site tickets are \$25 per person. The Alexandria tour will be held on its scheduled day, rain or shine.

The pay-for-parking lots and garages in Old Town are located at:

- ❖ Cameron Street at North Saint Asaph Street
- ❖ Cameron Street at North Pitt Street
- ❖ South Pitt Street, between Prince and King Streets
- ❖ North Fairfax Street at King Street
- ❖ North Lee Street at King Street
- ❖ South Union Street between Prince and Duke Streets.

Historic Garden Week tours throughout



Five Old Town Alexandria homes and gardens will open to the public on April 22 as part of the 84th Historic Garden Week.

Virginia have been held annually since 1929, except for a period during World War II, when members of the Garden Club of Virginia (GCV) took time off to tend to their Victory Gardens and help with the war effort. Known as "America's Largest Open House," every year, more than 3,300 GCV members work to produce the tours during the last full week of April. Tour proceeds go to the restoration of gardens and grounds of Virginia's most historic sites, including Monticello and Mt. Vernon. Last year the tours grossed just under \$1 million. To learn more about the restorations, go to www.gcvirginia.org and look under Restorations. There are six tours in the northern Virginia area this spring featuring 34 private homes/gardens.

Butterfly Weed Wins Perennial of the Year

BY CAROLE FUNGER
GAZETTE PACKET

GARDENING weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) more than rose to the occasion. In November it was voted 2017 Perennial Plant of the Year, becoming the 27th in a distinguished line of perennials to receive such an honor.

The designation Perennial Plant of the Year is awarded each year by the Perennial Plant Association to the perennial that outshines its competitors not only in appearance, but also in its noteworthy characteristics. To be considered, a plant must be able to grow in a wide range of climates, require little maintenance and have multiple seasons of interest. And, it should be relatively pest and disease free.

That's a tall order for many plants, but late last year, orange-flowering butterfly

weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) more than rose to the occasion. In November it was voted 2017 Perennial Plant of the Year, becoming the 27th in a distinguished line of perennials to receive such an honor. Native to much of the continental United States as well as Ontario and Quebec, butterfly weed grows wild in a variety of climatic conditions including dry forests, along roadsides and in prairies and open fields. A member of the milkweed family, it tops out at about 1 to 2 feet. Its natural preference for average to dry soil makes it an excellent drought-resistant plant.

Butterfly weed's large clusters of flowers are a brilliant orange-yellow, a beacon among other subtler-toned plants. Happily blooming from June through August, they produce copious amounts of nectar that attracts hordes of butterflies, birds and a wide assortment of insects. The distinctive flowers are composed of five petals that stand up (called hoods) and five petals that hang down. The hoods enclose a single orange horn that when cross-pollinated, forms a follicle. Later in the season, the follicle opens up along one side to disperse silky-tailed seeds.

Not to be outdone, butterfly weed's foli-

age has its own attractions. Long and pointed, the 4" leaves provide food for the larvae of native Monarch butterflies, while also lending a deep green backdrop to the brilliant flowers.

Plant butterfly weed in full sun in well-drained, moderately dry soil. For an eye-catching composition, pair it with other strong-hued perennials like *Liatris spicata*, *Echinacea* 'Double Scoop Raspberry' and *Hemerocallis* 'Stella D'Oro.' Or, let its orange flowers shine amidst subtler toned flowers like lemon-yellow *Hemerocallis* 'Happy Returns', white *Phlox* 'David' and apricot *Cosmos*.

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PHOTO BY MISTY KUCERIS

Horticulturalist Misty Kuceris says that pansies are an ideal flowering plant for spring.

Sow Now, Reap this Spring

Getting a garden and yard ready for warm weather.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

One of the most anticipated sights of spring is a garden in bloom. While the project of tackling a yard or garden after a dormant winter can seem daunting, horticulturalist Misty Kuceris of Burke Nursery & Garden Centre says an organized plan will make the task manageable.

“First walk around your yard and look at what’s happened over the winter months,” she said. “Look at your trees and shrubs. Do they need pruning before things really start growing?”

Flower and garden beds should be surveyed as well, says Kuceris. “If you didn’t clean out the flower beds and vegetable beds at the end of fall, you need to do that,” she said. “Take a look at whether you need to add more compost to make the soil better.”

Even after flowerbeds are clean, David Watkins, general manager of Merrifield Garden Center says that homeowners should wait before planting warm season flowers like impatiens and begonias. “You want to hold off until the last frost is gone, he said. “Some nurseries however have tulips and daffodils that are already potted. Those can be planted now. There is also a Lenten Rose which blooms from February until June and you can add color to your yard that way.”

Kuceris also suggests reestablishing the weathered edging of a garden bed and adding new mulch when necessary. “The other thing that is good to do every two years is a soil test,” she said. “Find out the pH is of your lawn and garden.” Soil pH is a measure of the acidity and alkalinity in soils.

One source that Kuceris recommends is the Virginia Tech Soil Testing Laboratory. Researchers analyze soil samples submitted by the public and perform tests to evaluate the soil’s nutrient potential. The tests also help researchers determine the most beneficial application rates of fertilizer and lime for optimum plant growth.

After the garden is tidy and the soil is prepared, vegetables can be planted.

“If you have a vegetable garden, March is the best time to plant potatoes, scallions, onions, asparagus, lettuce, kale, cauliflower, broccoli, and even horseradish because those plants love spring,” said Kuceris. “We call them cool season plants.”

If weeds are an issue, you can apply a weed and crabgrass preventer and fertilizer,” says Kuceris. “For a natural alternative, you can use corn gluten meal as a natural weed suppressant and fertilizer for grass lawns.”

“With anything you plant now, the roots are going to start growing and you’ll have a much better established plant by summer,” added Watkins.

Most trees or shrubs can also be planted now, says Watkins. “Now is a great time to mulch and fertilize your trees, shrubs and lawn,” he said. “That alone makes it look a lot better, even without planting.”

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Kitchen Design Trends to Expect in 2017

Local designer share popular design ideas.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

Those looking for kitchen design ideas have a new source of inspiration: the National Kitchen & Bath Association's (NKBA) list of trends for 2017. Local designers reveal which trends are most popular in the Washington, D.C. region.

NKBA predicts that contemporary-styled kitchens will overtake traditional to become the second most popular design after transitional. Locally, Michael Winn, president of Winn Design + Build expects to see "a strong move towards transitional and contemporary styles, with no fussy designs."

Homeowners are looking for "kitchen spaces that look comfortable, calming and clutter-free," said Shannon Kadwell of Anthony Wilder Design/Build, Inc.

Clean lines, built-in shelving and simple door styles dominate kitchen designs. Megan Padilla, senior designer for Aidan Design reports an interest in custom storage ideas. "We're inspired by our work with clients who often have collections of table



White and gray painted cabinets like those in this kitchen by Winn Design + Build will dominate kitchen color schemes in 2017.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WINN DESIGN + BUILD

décor — everything from antique trays to vintage oyster plates," she said. "By creating custom storage these cherished items can be readily accessible."

When it comes to painted cabinetry, gray is the new white and the popularity of both colors shows no signs of slowing down, according to the NKBA survey. However, blue painted and high gloss kitchen cabinets are emerging, especially in the Washington area, says Winn. "Blues and grays are very popular [and] "White continues to be popular."

For overall color schemes, two-toned kitchens are gaining popularity while blue and black are emerging as sought after colors. "We're seeing a rise in product offerings available in matte black — from appliances to plumbing fixtures to cabinet hardware," said Padilla. "We love it paired with white in a classic black and white kitchen, but also as an accent piece. Matte black also pairs beautifully with brass, which has been trending for the past couple of years."

Quartz is the most sought-after kitchen

countertop material, followed by granite. "Most of our clients aren't really interested in a kitchen that [is] too trendy since they plan to have it in place for 15-20 years," said Padilla. "We've seen an uptick in interest in incorporating color by way of alternate neutrals. Navy blue is probably the top choice, but taupes and lighter blues are also on the list."

An interest among homeowners in incorporating technology in kitchen design is increasing as well. About one third of the NKBA professionals surveyed reported recent projects that included wiring and pathways for future tech integration. "I would also expect the technology side to be a focus in D.C.," said Samantha Klickna, project developer with Case Design/Remodeling, Inc. "The ease and comfort of controlling your home while at the office or on travel is very appealing and convenient for the city dweller."

Induction cooktops and convection ovens are trending higher, and microwave drawers are surpassing freestanding or built-in microwaves in popularity. "People have been purchasing appliances like steam ovens and induction ovens now more than ever before," said Kadwell. "People have less time, but still want to cook. They want to be able to cook quickly, so they're looking for appliances that can accomplish that."



Alexandria City

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Snap Shot

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