



Zo

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS:**

**Monday, April 8:** Showing of environmental film “All That Breathes” at Wesleyan’s Goldsmith Family Cinema. 7 pm. (Free)

**Tuesday, April 9:** Garden Club of Darien presents Todd Forrest of the NYBG, discussing environmental improvements to the gardens. 6:30 pm

**Friday, April 12:** Calling Hours for Sally D’Aquila at Biega’s Funeral Home. 3 to 7 pm

**Saturday, April 13:** Funeral for Sally D’Aquila, Old Lyme Congregational Church. 10 am

**Thursday, April 18:** Business meeting and program by Lindsey Taylor with sale of her book, *Art in Flower*, at the Wadsworth Mansion. Open to the public. (Business meeting follows.) 1 pm.

**Saturday, April 20:** Earth Day Extravaganza at Harbor Park. 12 to 3 pm.

**Friday, April 26:** Arbor Day Celebration at the Wadsworth Mansion. Public invited. 10 am

**REMINDER:**

The April meeting will take place at the Wadsworth Mansion at 1 pm on the 18<sup>th</sup> – open to the public!

**Friday, April 26:** The Garden Club of America’s Annual Meeting begins at the CT Convention Center in Hartford. Activities continue through Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup>. The flower show is open to the public.

**Thursday, May 16:** MGC Annual Meeting and Awards Program at the Wadsworth Mansion. 11 am

**MINUTES OF MARCH 21, 2024 MEETING:**

For the benefit of the two presenters, the club’s business meeting took place following two interesting presentations. Introduced by Deborah Shapiro, Wesleyan Adjunct Professor Kate TenEyck spoke about plans for tiled murals to be installed in the tunnel leading to Harbor Park. Her plans include collaborations with local artists such as Pierre Sylvain and Wendy Black-Nasta, as well as local elementary students. The subject matter will be mostly historical, including references to slavery in Middletown; pre-history will also be represented in the form of fossils.

Following Professor TenEyck was Nancy DuBrule who presented a tantalizing array of native flowering plants, from annuals, through bulbs, herbs, and woody plants. Her printed hand-outs will be a great shopping guide for those who want to “go native.”

Filling in for President Holzberg and Vice-President Wuestefeld, Secretary Harris called the meeting to order following a break for delicious home-made bread, cheeses, and mini quiches provided by Edwina and Stephan.

After calling for votes on the minutes and the Treasurer’s report (both unanimously approved), Harris thanked Edwina and Stephan, as well as Nancy DuBrule, who stayed briefly to chat and sample the delicious treats.

Harris then reminded the club that the April meeting is open to the public: Lindsey Taylor, formerly with *Martha Stewart Living* and other shelter magazines, will lecture about flower arranging as demonstrated in her new book, *Art in Flower*. Wesleyan/R.J. Julia Bookstore will have staff on-site to sell her books, which she will autograph. That meeting and the club’s annual meeting in May will be held at the Wadsworth Mansion.

Volunteers need to register on-line to work at the GCA Annual Meeting in Hartford as soon as possible. Aprons can be ordered at the same time.

With several members ailing, Harris asked those in attendance to make calls and send cards.

#### Committee Reports:

**Founders Fund:** Chairman Edwina described the three nominees and asked for members to vote on ballots she distributed. The club’s vote will be submitted to GCA.

**Conservation/NAL:** Lynne reported that she had been very impressed by the content and connections she experienced in attending NAL in Washington. Members are reminded that videos from the conference are available on the GCA website.

**Finance:** Treasurer Xenelis asked members to submit any anticipated budget expenditure for the 2024-2025 budget. She will present that budget in April, and the club will vote on it at the May meeting. She also asked for a club vote on renewing our membership in the CT Flower Collective, which passed unanimously.

**Horticulture:** Kathy reminded members to continue tending their violas for the Gavel Challenge in April. Mary mentioned that the club will need a leader for the annual planting of urns at Sbona Towers close to Mother’s Day. Jane also asked members to help with pruning the roses at the Trees of Honor.

**Rooftop:** Stephan said that work will begin soon, getting the beds ready for planting. Jane mentioned that the Community Health Center has received a large grant to build a greenhouse at the corner of Main and Grand Streets; the club had sent a supporting letter as part of the grant application.

There being no further reports or new business, Harris asked for a motion to adjourn at 3:15 pm.

Attendance:

Present: S. Allison, E. Bank, J. Bell, S. Cornish, L. Garner, J. Harris, L. Johnson, A. McCloskey, O. McLaughlin, K. Meyering, P. Mylchreest, E. Ranganathan, R. Rickenback, J. Schoonmaker, D. Shapiro, C. Wasch, M. Xenelis.

Excused: A. Albert, E. Carella, K. Coley, N. D'Oench, T. Ferguson, M. Giamei, K. Green, R. Higgins, M. Kalayjian, M. Holzberg, M. Roberts, K. Wuestefeld, S. Worm

**ROOFTOP:**

The rooftoppers will meet on Friday, April 12 for a planning session. Additional gardeners are welcome – contact Stephan if you are interested in participating.

**HORTICULTURE:**

If you wish to enter your viola at the GCA annual meeting this month, please plan to bring your plant to my house on Wednesday, April 24 so we can look over the progress each of your plants has made and choose the best contender for the Gavel Challenge!

My address: 129 Paterson Dr,  
Middletown, CT 06457

~ Kathy



Photo credit: Stephan Allison

*"In the spring at the end of the day you should smell like dirt." ~ Margaret Atwood*



## In Memory of Maria Madsen Holzberg

Maria Madsen Holzberg surrounded herself with beauty. From her terraced gardens where her beloved dogs Fiona and Chester happily romped to the many gardens she helped create throughout Middletown, her dotting husband, Robert, her family, friends, and even strangers were rewarded with safe and relaxing spaces that soothed the soul. When visitors entered her home, they were immediately enveloped in her world of vibrant colors and the fragrance of her floral creations. This is the Maria that we in the Middletown Garden Club knew and loved.

Maria was born on July 29, 1955 in Norwalk, CT. She graduated from Wilton High School in 1973, and earned a Bachelor of Arts from Mount Holyoke College in 1973. She first entered the world of politics by serving as a legislative aide to Governor Ella Grasso and later as Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner of Human Services in Hartford. She returned to school to earn her Juris Doctor in 1983 at the University of Connecticut where she met her future husband, Robert L. Holzberg.

Following her service as Legal Counsel and Executive Assistant to the Commissioner of Children and Youth Services in the administration of Governor William O'Neill, in 1995 she put on her famous white sneakers that are now in the collection of the Middlesex County Historical Society, and knocked on the doors of nearly every registered voter in Middletown. After hearing her ideas and progressive agenda, the voters gave her an upset victory in the Democratic primary and a resounding win in the general election, making her the first woman Mayor in the city's history.

During her term she secured voter approval for the rescue and restoration of the Wadsworth Mansion, the renovation of the Wilbert Snow School, and the building of a new police station on Main Street. Ever mindful of the history of her adopted town, she advocated for the design to evoke fond memories of the old

City Hall that had stood across the street. She sparked the revival of Main Street by encouraging restaurants to locate here and Middletown is now a premier dining destination.

After serving as Mayor, Maria was appointed as the first Juvenile Public Defender in the history of the Middlesex Judicial District, a position she held until her retirement in 2014. Since then, the citizens of Middletown have benefitted from her tireless work to beautify the city with many pocket parks and the Harbor Park Garden installed by the Middletown Garden Club under her leadership. It will be dedicated as the Maria Madsen Holzberg Pollinator Pathway. Her floral arrangements won many awards at flower shows around the region and her talents were always visible as she decorated the General Mansfield House, home of the Middlesex County Historical Society, every December. She served many years on the Board of Directors of the historical society and was President of the Middletown Garden Club for nearly four years.

In the words of our mutual friend, Krishna Winston, “Maria understood that beauty is no luxury; it lifts our spirits and strengthens what is best in us.” That is Maria’s legacy to us.

~ Debby Shapiro

