

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASON-DIXON UNIT  
OF  
THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA



# WILD THYMES

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 5

JUNE 2009

## JUNE GREETINGS

Dear Folks,

The last week of May I had a telephone conversation with a staff member from Compassionate Care—an organization which provides hospice services and family member support, before, during, and after the death of a loved one (yes, this is a plug for this excellent organization). Shannon had asked me what I was doing for myself, and I explained about my involvement in and the many facets of the M-D U.

As part of our discussion I told her about the unit's in-common readings, that I wasn't related to Susan Wittig Albert, and that I had had the privilege of sharing lunch with Susan Wittig Albert at the Pennsylvania Herb Festival this past April. I described Albert's books as light reading of a mystery genre, somewhat like Nancy Drew for adults. As I made that statement, she let out a single syllable laugh. I asked what was so funny. She had put Susan Wittig Albert into wikipedia and found, "Her writing career has included the [Nancy Drew](#) mysteries under the penname [Carolyn Keene](#) in the 1980s."

As a child, I enjoyed reading Nancy Drew, Dana Girls, Hardy Boys, and Trixie Belden mysteries. But as time moved on, I began reading other authors and other genres, and while I may have left behind my reading of Nancy Drew mysteries fifteen years before Susan began writing under the Carolyn Keene pseudonym, I still have my collection in the library in our house. Perhaps I will revisit Nancy Drew after I read my way through the China Bayles series.

Happy Reading and Weeding!

*Diane L.M. Wittig, Editor*



Bay Laurel

*Laurus Nobilis*  
Herb of the Year

**Did you know . . .**  
that when one is cooking soup, the bay leaf is added at the beginning of cooking so that the bay steeps and slowly imparts a deep, rich flavor?

### BIRTHDAYS:

- June 25, Jane
- July 7, Shirley

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## HELPFUL TIPS ON SPRING HERBS

By Pat Herbert

- When cutting herbs, use a sharp knife or scissors to avoid bruising. You can also tear herbs – the leaves will rip along the veins and release more flavor during cooking.
- To store fresh herbs, wash and dry cuttings thoroughly, then place the leaves in an airtight container in the fridge. This way, the herbs are ready to go when needed and occupy less fridge space.
- Chives can be preserved by chopping them and then storing them in a jar or bag in the freezer.
- Chervil and dill are not suitable for drying as they will lose their flavor.
- Some herbs, such as parsley, tarragon, and mint, can be dried to preserve them. Hang small bunches of herbs upside down in a warm, dry, and well-ventilated place, or in a paper bag with ventilation holes in the sides.

## MAY MINUTES

By Shirley Smith

### -Old Business

The M-D U welcomed Carla Yohe to the meeting. Carla, who lives in York, found out about the M-D U from our booth at the Pennsylvania Herb Festival that took place in April. We thoroughly enjoyed her company and hope she will join us again. Our presence at the Pa. Herb Festival was considered a success since it enticed Carla to come to our meeting. We met quite a few people at this event who expressed interest in our unit. We anticipate their visits at future meetings.

The Unit has been quite busy and we looked at lessons learned through our involvement for future activities. The education booth we set up at the Pennsylvania Herb Festival provided information about The Herb Society of America, our own Mason-Dixon Unit, and Bay, which is the Herb of the Year. We decided that we had made too many business cards for distribution, and next year we would only make 1,000. The beautiful window display that we created in the lobby of the Paul Smith Library in Shrewsbury was well received by the public. It featured information on Bay, again using the tri-fold display board about bay, as well as other herb and garden related artifacts. Additionally, the M-D U business cards were available so the public could learn about both bay and the M-D U. We anticipate that we will create the May 2010 showcase display focused around dill. A plant sale was held at the New Freedom Yard Sale and at O'Shea Lumber to bolster the M-D U treasury. These fundraisers were deemed successful. There was a consensus that predetermining which herb to buy and in which quantity, to meet the choices of the public, is very difficult.

A tentative date of September 11-12, 2009, was set for an overnight weekend trip. We would start out on Friday, September 11th to visit the British Embassy Garden in Washington, DC., and then go on to the Richmond, Va., gardens of Matt and Mark. On Saturday, September 12, we would give our Under the Arbor demonstration and talk at the National Arboretum in Washington, DC.

### -New Business

Candy informed us that Wal-Mart has a lidded metal trash can with an insert that can hold kitchen scraps headed for composting. Thank you, Candy. Great idea!

Annual membership need to be paid in August. The HSA headquarters requires all updates on renewals by August 15th. Members of M-D U are to bring a check for \$65.00 (made out to the Mason-Dixon Herb Unit) to our July 16 meeting. This amount covers dues of \$50.00 for HSA membership and \$15.00 for the Mason-Dixon Unit's yearly expenses. The HSA dues include many benefits such as access to the HAS Library, informational videos, and admission discounts to some gardens, arboreta, and conservatories.

Since the Unit needs to start filling out the activity sheet for the HSA, the sheet was placed on the bulletin board for future entries. We also have a public garden to create. Pat S. volunteered a spot in her yard. We could invite a group of senior citizens, for example, to come view our public garden at Pat Sweetman's.

A fun "Summer Herbs to Identify" quiz was handed out by Candy. We answered the six questions together and got them all right. Then Diane guided us through the "Survival Kit for New Herbies". She handed each of us a baggie filled with various and sundry items. As she read her survival strategies, we had to pick an item out of the baggie that was symbolic of the strategy that she had just read. This activity was so much fun that we decided to have everyone receive a survival kit at our 2010 Symposium.

We learned what the Top Ten Herbs were out of the Rabbit Hill catalog. They were: lemon verbena, basil, patchouli, aloe, garlic chives, cilantro/coriander, Mexican mint/Mexican marigold, Cuban oregano, pineapple sage, and lemon grass.

### -ongoing Business

Final preparations were made for the May 30th plant sale at O'Shea Lumber. We discussed what herbs were requested the most at the New Freedom Plant Sale and what more we need to have available. Annette, Diane, and Pat S. are to man the plant sale on May 30th.

In preparation for our 2010 Symposium, we made Crème de Menthe this month. It consists of vodka, simple sugar syrup, and mixed fresh mint. We are still searching for a site for our 2010 Symposium. Pat H. found out that the Gettysburg Hotel was much too expensive. She is now researching the Eisenhower Center as a possible site.

We made plans to have a picture of dill (since it is the Herb of the Year for 2010) and a dill recipe on our business cards for next year. It was decided that we would start soon on researching information about dill, in preparation for the display board and booklet for distribution at the 2010 symposium in Gettysburg.

The meeting was adjourned and we enjoyed refreshments of chocolate cupcakes with chocolate ganache, chocolate pudding with Bay, pound cake with fresh strawberries, and whipped cream with mint.



## FINANCIAL REPORT

By Pat Herbert

Our current checkbook balance is \$758.50.

Profit from our New Freedom Yard sales was \$253.00. This money has been deposited in our account and is included in the above checkbook balance.

Our profit from the Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup> sale at O'Shea's Lumber came to \$150. This money has not yet been deposited in our account. Also, our \$15.00 profit from the Glen Rock Day Festival needs to be deposited in our account.

In all, we made more than \$400.00 with our plant sales, which was a very pleasing profit for our small group.

## DUES REMINDER FROM THE TREASURER-PAT HERBERT

Annual dues are \$50 to headquarters for membership in the Herb Society of America, which includes many benefits (check the hsa website). Also, dues are \$15 to our group, the Mason-Dixon Unit, for yearly expenses. Since this is due before our August meeting, I am asking everyone to bring a check for \$65.00 (made out to Mason-Dixon Herb Unit) to our July 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## FIELD TRIP—BALTIMORE HERB FESTIVAL

By Shirley Smith

Five members of the Mason-Dixon Unit ventured forth on Saturday, May 23rd, to head for the Baltimore Herb Festival, which "celebrates all things herbal". We left the country sides of Maryland and Pennsylvania for the wilds of Baltimore City. Luckily, the ride down was smooth and uneventful ~ so much so that we arrived there early and had to stand in line for the festival to open. That was OK because it was a splendidly beautiful day. The morning sun got a bit warm while we were waiting to get in, but time went quickly as we chatted.

It didn't take long, once we were allowed in, before a massively heavy giant stone frog called to Pat Sweetman. It must have been a pretty smooth talker because Pat was buying it before you could say, "Ribbit." Now Frog had a friend there who stood up watching and especially listening with

its big ears. Frog couldn't leave without him! Rabbit poured on the charm and enticed Pat Herbert to buy him. She named him Jack, after her father. Rabbit was also huge and heavy. It's a good thing we came in my big van!

There were vendors of herbs, flowers, unusual plants, and garden related antiques. Handmade soaps, lotions, gourds, crafts, food, and various other herb related items were also for sale. That people came prepared to buy was evident since they brought along an assortment of rolling carts and wagons, some of which were inventive and whimsical. Each of us from M-D U had a full cart when she left.

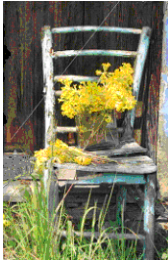
I, personally, could have used another cart. My cart was more than full. I thought I was done. Silly me. I saw a beguiling miniature garden with a Cotswold Cottage. Years ago, when

my husband and I were making plans to build our house, I wanted a Cotswold Cottage. He built something else. Thirty-seven years later, I finally got my Cotswold Cottage. YAY! It sits in a miniature garden outside my kitchen door.

Our individual selection of herbs were varied. Pat Herbert bought lemon balm and lemon thyme. Diane favors the culinary herbs, so she took home lemon thyme, silver tipped thyme, Greek and sweet basil, caraway, sweet cicely, golden marjoram, and pineapple sage. I got rosemary and Genovese basil. Annette bought red fennel, curry, angelica, and sweet annie. Along with the herbs, we all found plants and flowers that we just had to have.

The day was a delight. Sunshine, herbs and flowers, a picnic lunch, and spending the day in the company of my wonderful fellow herbies. Perfect.

## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR—PAT SWEETMAN



June is finally here, and the worker bees that we really are have made it through this busy spring.

I cannot tell you how happy our small group has made me in our accomplishments of these busy last couple of months.

We had a great booth at the PA Herb festival. We handed out lots of business cards . . . had nice chats with LOTS of people, and altho' so far we have no new members from that effort, we still educated our public, and that is part of the job.

Our window at the Paul Smith Shrewsbury public library was a 'looker', and a goal was met for educating the public for Herb Month.

We have the two plant boxes on the porch of that library filled with "sweet herbs" for people to go by and sniff and enjoy.

Our plant sales turned out well. We actually *made* money; with plants enough that members could buy a few extra they may have needed and a some more for planting at the club house for future use for the unit.

We hit the Baltimore herb festival with a vengeance . . . leaving a few plants and garden ornaments for the rest of the public, and then we all worked in our own gardens at home. Whew !!!!!!!!

When I look over our last 6 weeks, I am more than impressed. June could be a time for a nap here and there—just to recover.

We are a small group, but we accomplish so much. I am so very appreciative of you all. We get it done, and have a good time.

Now that our plants are in our own gardens, it is just good weeding time . . . and more good weeding time . . . oh . . . and more good weeding time...

BUT the positive thing about herbs are . . . when you are out in the garden weeding, you can also have a snack on a leaf or two of something good . . . basil tastes so much better than a zinnia!!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all of your hard work!

Pat

## CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE FOR FALL 2010 SYMPOSIUM

By Pat Herbert

### Save the dates: October 15 and 16, 2010



All roads lead to . . .

2634 Emmitsburg Road  
Gettysburg, PA 17325



Phone: 717-334-8121 or 800-776-8349

Fax: 717-334-6066

<http://www.eisenhower.com>

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED— MAY 30TH/JUNE 6TH HERB SALE

By Annette Steger

This event required intense sign preparation, which included planning where to put the signs and scavenging leftover election signs, cardboard, and wooden posts. Pat Sweetman and Diane scavenged the materials and painted and wrote the signs earlier in the week. Annette and Diane placed the signs on Friday, right before the rain storm. (Actually, we got wet before we were done.)

This stand-alone herb sale was more worthwhile than expectations had suggested in the first two hours. We had 15 customers who stopped just for our plants since there were no vendors but us. Only one customer left without buying. The others bought from 1 to 8 plants each. Some of the customers were from out of county and one was from New York. We had good interactions with all shoppers.

On this beautiful day, we had time to chat among ourselves and discovered that the newly cleaned meeting house still needed carpet and that there was a slightly used carpet in a member's

garage. Tuesday after the herb sale that carpet was delivered and laid.

Our receipts for the day were \$141.00 before Diane, Pat, and Annette shopped wholesale. Also, Annette offered to see if the hardier herbs could be sold at the Glen Rock Street Fair-June 6<sup>th</sup>. Pat suggested selling the plants for \$2.75 or \$2.50 each. Annette babysat the two and one half flats of plants for the next few days while the rest of the plants went back to Stone Haus Farm to be used to create a public garden there near our club house.

On Monday morning, Diane and Annette, on behalf of the M-D U, donated one of the remaining planters to the helpful O'Shea staff and cookies to the maintenance man who provided the water for us.

The next Saturday, Annette handled the herbs and "Bouquet Garni" cards at the Immanuel United Methodist Youth Fellowship Stand. She sold six plants at \$2.50. each.

## THYMELY NOTES

**July 16**—The meeting for June has been cancelled. And, since our "Under the Arbor Program", at the National Herb Arboretum, is no longer scheduled in July, we will hold our next regularly scheduled meeting on the third Thursday of July. Remember to bring dues.

**Open Date**—If you are available to plant herbs one afternoon for our public garden after June, please send Pat S. an email with dates and times.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO THE JULY MEETING

Old business will include the Lessons Learned from our Baltimore Herb Festival Field Trip and from the May 30th Herb Sale.

New business will include moon gardens.

Part of our ongoing business will be discussing our new Susan Wittig Albert book, Witches' Bane. Also, we will be planning more details for the Fall 2010 Symposium, determining the dates for our Va. and Washington DC field trip, and making another liqueur.

## FAMILY STORIES FROM A FARM GIRL

By Annette Steger

Making maple syrup is one of the activities that my sister, Kathie and I were reminded of as we continued our task of clean-up at the farmhouse, barn and garages. This production took place during early spring when it still froze at night, but there was thawing during the day. I recall riding in a low-sided wagon that had a tank on it. The wagon was pulled by a Farmall tractor that my Dad drove through the woods to the maple trees that had been "tapped". The tank is what the pails of sap were emptied into for transport to the shed where the sap was cooked. The cooking process took hours and hours. It was done in large shallow pans over a wood fire in a special fireplace under a very basic roof. There were no walls. We called this "building" the Sap House.

During our building clean-up, we found the spikes (also called spiles or spouts) that are driven into the tree trunks to obtain the sap. Dad said we just use sugar maples. We found the metal pails that hung on the spikes to collect the sap as it ran out of the tree. The pails had covers so the sap would not be diluted by rain or snow. We also found the dark heavy metal pans used for the cook-down process. If foam formed during the evaporation process, it had to be skimmed off since it contained impurities. I think I remember a special thermometer. I also do not recall how the filtering was done. My Mom put the thickened syrup into pint and quart jars for storage in the dirt basement of the house.

Mom also made maple sugar, which was very grainy. I also recall pouring the hot syrup on snow and it made a clear product that had a taffy-like consistency. The candies were way too sweet for me. I have found in recent years I like to have a maple-flavored egg at Easter. Am I returning to my roots? Also, I think that the maple flavor is almost as much fun to cook with as herbs.

## GOOD READ RECOMMENDATIONS—

By Pat Sweetman

If anyone needs a rest from the garden, I have a few recommendations for you to get either from Border's or the public library. Or you can even borrow these books from me . . .

The First and best book is *Laughter on the Stairs* by Beverly Nichols (man). He was a garden writer in the 50's in England, and he just has the funniest take on trying to get his gardens going. Of course, he has money and a gardener, but he still has trials and tribulations to deal with . . . don't all gardeners? He actually wrote more books, but this is the first of the trilogy and the one I enjoyed the most.

The next book is *Tulipomania: The Story of the World's Most Coveted Flower & the Extraordinary Passions It Aroused*. In this book, Mike Dash tells about how tulips took over Holland as currency and how people paid as much as an ocean liner would cost for one bulb. (the stock market, house mortgages, greed, house of cards . . . history repeats itself). There is no sex (except among the tulips), but there are mystery, robbery, and surprise. Parts are 'page turners' and this is another highly recommended book.

*Old Herbaceous*, a novel written in the early 1950s by Michael Joseph, now in reprint, is about an old gardener who started out just as a little boy picking wildflowers, but who became an esteemed flower show judge and famed horticultural wizard. This book is a delight. It has gardening wisdom here and there, but it is just a nice little book about an old English gardener. Two evenings in the hammock with some mint tea and gin should get you through this one.

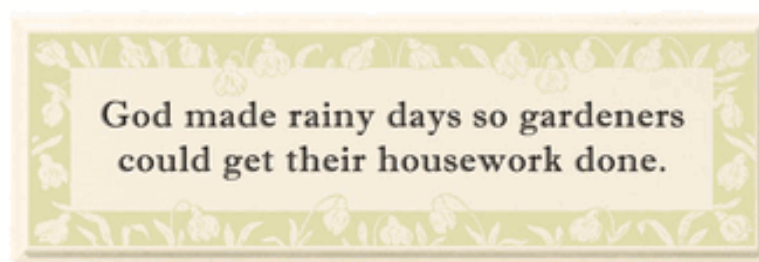
Enjoy.



## RAINY DAYS

By Shirley Smith

I found a saying,



That unknown author obviously needs to see a therapist about his/her cleaning compulsion. Who has time for housework on rainy days? There are too many gardening catalogs to go through. Dust bunnies run amok while I search for the perfect heirloom tomato. The laundry pile is reminiscent of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Too bad. There's a Susan Wittig Albert book to read. I have lavender to use up from last summer, so sachets are in the making. The only thing I'll be cleaning on a rainy day is the teapot for a cup of tea. Because, most important of all, I have rain to watch and to listen to.

**GOOD READ**—EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM GARDENING\*

*You always reap what you sow  
The plot always thickens when it rains  
Some people are naturally corny  
Weed out all the annoyances in your life  
We've all got our own rows to hoe  
Stay away from seedy characters  
Always try to be outstanding in your field  
It's okay to be a late bloomer  
Keep your hands off your neighbor's peonies  
Sow your wild oats with care  
It's very prestigious to be in the Ivy League  
Some problems are perennial  
It's best to keep mum about certain subjects  
A little manure goes a long way  
One person's garbage is another's compost  
There's nothing more refreshing than a morning shower  
It's important to branch out  
There are some things best left unfertilized  
Remember that life's full of surprises . . .  
you never know just what might crop up next.*

*~Author Unknown~*

\*Provided by Pat Sweetman

## GREAT EATS WITH BAY—JAMAICAN STYLE NUTTY CHICKEN \*

Submitted By Diane L.M. Wittig

### INGREDIENTS:

6 skinless boneless chicken breasts  
 1 Tablespoon butter  
 1 (6-oz.) can orange juice concentrate, thawed  
 11/2 bay leaves  
 Juice of small lime  
 3 firm ripe bananas, thinly sliced  
 1/2 cup roasted almonds

### PER SERVING:

256 Calories; 12g Fat (40.9% calories from fat);  
 13g Protein; 26g Carbohydrate; 2g Dietary Fiber;  
 31mg Cholesterol; 32mg Sodium. Exchanges: 0 Grain  
 (Starch); 1 1/2 Lean Meat; 1 1/2 Fruit; 1 1/2 Fat.

### DIRECTIONS:

**Season** chicken with salt and pepper. **Brown** chicken on both sides in butter in skillet over medium heat. **Reduce to low** and **add** 1/2 cup water, (1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper), orange juice, and bay leaf. **Bring to boil, cover, and simmer** for 20 minutes. **Turn** chicken once while cooking. **Remove** chicken and **keep warm**. **Bring liquid to a boil** over high heat for 5 minutes, **constantly stirring**. **Stir** in lime juice and bananas; **heat gently**. **Place** chicken on serving dish, **top** with sauce and **sprinkle** with nuts. Serve immediately.

**SERVING SUGGESTIONS:** Sweet potatoes and steamed broccoli would round this meal out nicely.

\*The recipe and suggestions are from Leanne Ely, The Dinner Diva, whose website is <http://www.savingdinner.com/>

## More GREAT EATS WITH BAY—CHOCOLATE PUDDING WITH BAY \*

Submitted By Shirley Smith

### INGREDIENTS:

2	C	half-and-half	¼	C	unsweetened cocoa
3	large	bay leaves or 2 dried bay leaves	½	C	milk
3	T	cornstarch	3	oz.	bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, cut into small pieces
2/3	C	sugar			
2	pinches	salt	½	t	vanilla extract

### DIRECTIONS:

**Heat** the half-and-half cream with the bay leaves in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat. When the cream starts to bubble around the edges of the pan, **remove** from heat and cover. **Let stand** for 30 minutes.

After the bay has infused in the cream for nearly 30 minutes, **combine** the cornstarch, sugar, salt, and cocoa in a bowl, and **add** the milk. **Whisk** the content together. **Pour** the mixture into the warm cream, and **place** over moderate heat. **Continue cooking and whisking** as the pudding thickens.

When the pudding begins to bubble and come to a boil, **stir** and **boil** for 1 minute. **Remove** the pan from the heat, and **whisk** in the chocolate pieces until they are melted. **Add** the vanilla, and **stir** well. Carefully **remove** the bay leaves, and **pour** the pudding into six ramekins or custard cups.

**Place** the custard cups on a plate or pan, and **allow** them to come to room temperature. **Refrigerate** until chilled, at least 30-45 minutes. **Serve** at cool room temperature, and **garnish** with whipped cream, if desired.

Shirley used: Scharffen Berger Cocoa Powder Unsweetened and Ghiradelli 60% Cacao Bittersweet Chocolate.

Yield: six servings

This recipe is from Susan Belsinger's book, Not Just Desserts, Sweet Herbal Recipes.

## NOTES TO MYSELF

For the July 16th meeting, I will write my responses to the following questions as I make them.

If I have information on moon gardens, am I bringing copies to share at the meeting, or am I sharing verbally?

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Which plants, if any, have I bought for my moon garden?

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Do I have any quotes or Good Reads to share?

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Did I register for the July 18 Fourth Annual Covered Dish Tea Luncheon? What am I bringing?

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**ONGOING THOUGHT:** What are some ideas for more “give aways” for our herbie friends for the Fall 2010 Symposium?

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**THINK AHEAD~**What information do I have to submit for the **WILD THYMES** July 1st deadline, and when will I submit it?

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What questions do I have?

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# WILD THYMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASON-DIXON UNIT  
OF  
THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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### HSA MISSION STATEMENT

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.

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- June 14-16     **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Herbal Delight Symposium**  
Conrad Weiser HS, 347 E. Penn Avenue, Robesonia, PA  
Information: Barb Jefferis at 610-375-8061 or Priscilla Plucinsky at
  
- July 11             **Susquehanna Iris Society Iris Sale**  
Begins at 9 am  
West Manchester Mall, Route 30, York, PA
  
- July 16             **Monthly Meeting of Mason-Dixon Unit at 7 pm**  
Note change of date  
2595 Rehmeys Hollow Road, Stewartstown, PA  
Information: Pat at 717-235-2823
  
- July 18             **Fourth Annual Covered Dish Tea Luncheon**  
1129 Dunkard Valley Road, Loganville, PA  
Information: Shirley Smith [@sasjgr@aol.com](mailto:@sasjgr@aol.com)  
**National Herb Garden Experience**  
Information: To be forthcoming  
**Virginia Garden and British Embassy Garden Tours**  
Information: To be forthcoming
  
- Oct. 2-4            **Mid-Atlantic District Symposium**  
Hosted by Roanoke Valley Unit  
Information: To be forthcoming

### MEMBERSHIP CONTACT INFORMATION FOR MASON-DIXON UNIT

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THINK NEW MEMBERS... THINK NEW MEMBERS... THINK NEW MEMBERS... THINK NEW MEMBERS