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GEDDY GARDEN NEWS

*"Tis spring the April of the year,
The holiday of birds and flowers,
Some build ere yet the leaves appear,
While others wait for safer hours."*

"April" by John Clare

April is a special month full of exciting signs of nature springing back to life. One of my personal favorite plants is the simple Forsythia shrub. Its yellow flowers mean spring to me. It was named for William Forsyth, who was a superintendent of the royal gardens at Kensington Palace in the eighteenth century. In Korea, it is known as the bush that rejuvenates love due to a well-known love poem a Korean man wrote to his wife. He wrote,

*"In the late spring the canaries come,
The forsythia fades and the apricots fall,
And in the bamboo shade of my mountain home,
Forever abides, my love, my all."*

The month of April begins on a light note with April Foods Day, a day for fun and harmless tricks. Then the month is full of interesting events.

For Christians it is the month of Easter and for those of the Jewish faith it is when Passover is celebrated. Here in Colonial Williamsburg April is Religion Month. One of the religion programs was given by Lytton John Musselman of Old Dominion University. His topic was about plants mentioned in the Bible. He limited his selection to a very few of the 125 that are mentioned. I learned that when they spoke of the sycamore tree in the Bible, it was unlike what we know as a sycamore tree now - it was more like a fig tree.

Another event offered in the city was a celebration of Earth Day, which helps us be mindful of respecting the environment.

England celebrates the 19th of April as Primrose Day. It commemorates the death of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli in 1881. The primrose was his favorite flower, hence the name, Primrose Day.

In the last part of April, National Park Week is celebrated. This is a good time to take advantage of the National Parks nearby and pay them a visit.

The highlight of April for me was the 57th Garden Symposium here in Colonial Williamsburg. We were treated to some excellent speakers. The lectures were on diverse subjects and there are always new facts to be learned from each.

Rev. Doug Seidel from Pennsylvania is a collector of historic plants and spoke about old roses. I especially enjoyed seeing a slide of the *Rosa virginiana*, a rose that George Washington gave to a friend.

Due to some last minute changes in the program, some of our own talented garden experts spoke. They were excellent. Wesley Greene spoke on pruning, but he covered so much more in his lecture that all kinds of information was gained. He was entertaining and informative.

Larry Griffith, our curator of plants, explained how he researches plants and traces them back in time. He said at one time all plants had utility.

Joel Bunn, our supervisor of IPM and arboriculture, shared a lot of useful information. He lectured on good and bad bugs and how to deal with them in your garden. Some of the important messages I learned from Joel were to always diagnose before you dose when giving treatments for pests and to keep records. Keep a garden calendar which includes how, when, and which plants were treated and for which problems. Don't ever wear yellow and blue in a greenhouse because bugs are attracted to those colors. A lot of useful information was given by Joel.

I also took part in the bus trip to the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden on the first day of the symposium. It took place on a beautiful day. The garden is divided into garden rooms and although each room had a charm of its own, my personal favorite was the healing garden in which purple and lavender colored flowers were blooming in an enclosed space. The garden also included a water fountain and several benches. It was a quiet place for spiritual healing through contemplation, meditation, and reflection.

A beautiful new conservatory had been opened there only ten days before our visit. It is a glass building which reaches 63 feet at the top of the dome and houses many tropical plants, including 200 orchids. The building has a pineapple on top, the symbol of hospitality.

The last speaker of the symposium was Felder Rushing. Felder is well known in the garden world for his garden writing. He is the author of books and articles on horticulture and he is respected for his knowledge. But it is his rare sense of humor that sets him apart from all other speakers. He was wonderful!

This year the symposium seemed to focus more on historical gardening, and I think that is very appropriate for this museum.

I think we are so lucky to have at our disposal places like the Lewis Ginter Garden and National Parks nearby. But more than that, we have here in our own museum such knowledgeable and capable people who can perform at a moment's notice and do such outstanding jobs. I also include in that group the behind-the-scenes people like Mary Cottrill, who so gracefully adjusted to all the last-minute changes in the agenda of the Garden Symposium. It made me so proud of Colonial Williamsburg.

Janet Guthrie