CHAUTAUQUA

BIRD TREE & GARDEN CLUB

What's in Bloom?

The Buttonbush is!

And the Buttonbush on **South Lake Drive** at the intersection of Peck is a great specimen.

The scientific name for the Buttonbush is *Cephalanthus occidentalis*. It's sometimes called a Button-Willow or Honey Bells.

The N**ational Champion Buttonbush** (the biggest one in the nation) is 26 ft. tall by 38 ft. wide and lives in **Buttonwillow, California**. (I don't know whether the town was named for the plant or the other way around and I don't even want to know because both options are delightful!).

Usually the shrub is a **rounded 3-6 feet tall** affair, so the one on South Lake Drive, which looks to be about 12 foot tall is somewhere between a usual suspect and a national champ.

The Buttonbush grows in **zones 3-11**. Now, that's what you call adaptable. It usually prefers wet areas and can even grow in water.

A native plant, the bees love it, **especially the bumblebees**. See the photos below.

This shrub caught nearly everyone's eye in **2020** because **the fruit**, which is technically "a rounded mass of nutlets" looks a heckuva lot like the spiked and spherical **coronavirus** as seen through the electron microscope. Boo hiss.

- Leslie Renjilian
- photos by Leslie and Ginny Renjilian

T h a n k Y o u !

The 2022 House & Garden Tour was a great success!
The list of Thank Yous is huge and I'm afraid to start listing because I will

inevitably leave someone off, but let's start with...

THE HOMEOWNERS who so graciously opened their homes to all of us - **THANK YOU!**

We are so grateful to our **Tour Chair, Rosemary Rappole** and the **200+ docent volunteers** who put the tour together and worked so hard to make everyone feel safe and welcome. And to the **Jamestown Master Gardeners** who volunteered their time in the gardens.

A HUGE thank you to **St. Betsy Burgeson** who delivered a killer lecture at Smith Wilkes Hall on the restoration of the Shipman Garden at Miller Cottage and then hosted for 5 hours in the garden. The lecture was filmed by the Chq Assembly and will be produced as a Heritage Series video.

And **Betsy's Crew** who made it ALL HAPPEN in those gardens!

To **Sara Toth, Skyler Black and the Chautauquan Daily Team** for tremendous coverage before and after - we thank you!

To the **Community Safety Officers** who work patrolled and jumped in to handle every emergency.

To **Megan Borgstrom** for the map and all that tech help!

To the **Opera Invaders**!

To **so many in the Colonnade** for so much help and support. To **Group Sales** for bringing in so many so safely.

To **Bob Jeffrey** for a beautiful lecture on Tuesday.

To **Lynda Acker** - the Voice of the Tour!

To **Jane Nelson** - the Artist of the Tour!

To **MW Graphics** for the Ticket Booklet and posters and napkins and all things printed.

To **Marty Gingell** for wisdom and guidance.

To our sponsors, especially the **Henrietta Ord Jones Society Members** for generous financial support.

We are also grateful to **Mother Nature** for yet another picture-perfect afternoon!

There were literally hundreds of people who made that day possible and we thank you!!

Above: Heather Wolf will present our Tuesday Brown Bag Lecture this week. Details are below with more information on our website.

Day by Day by the BTG

Monday, July 18

6:30 PM **Lake Talk: Katie Finch, Audubon Community Nature Center**
Location: Heinz Beach

Tuesday, July 19

12:15 PM **BTG Brown Bag Lecture: "The Birds that Surround Us and How to Find Them" with Heather Wolf, noted birder, author, photographer, and educator**
Location: Smith Wilkes Hall

Feel free to bring your lunch and listen to Heather discuss the migratory birds of the Chautauqua area and share tips for finding more birds, including colorful and curious neotropical migrants. She will also introduce eBird—one of the largest biodiversity citizen science projects in the world and one of Heather's projects as a web developer at The Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

**Heather's books will be available for purchase and signing following the lecture.

4:15 PM **Garden Walk with Horticulturist Joe McMaster**

Location: Smith Wilkes Hall - lakeside

Wednesday, July 20

4:15 PM **Tree Walk with Forester Jack Gulvin**

Location: Smith Wilkes Hall - lakeside

Thursday, July 21

7:30 AM **Bird Walk with Ornithologist Ruth Lundin**

Location: Smith Wilkes Hall.

* Binoculars encouraged, dogs discouraged!

4:15 PM **FINAL Purple Martin Chat with expert Jack Gulvin (before they fly!)**

Location: Purple Martin Houses by the Sports Club.

Friday, July 22

9:00 AM **Nature Walk with Naturalist Jack Gulvin**

Location: Smith Wilkes Hall - lakeside

12:30 PM **Garden Walk with Betsy Burgeson, Supervisor of Gardens and Landscapes, CHQ**

Location: Campbell Garden

****Most BTG walks involve some uneven ground. We suggest sturdy shoes.****

Saturday, July 23

9:00 AM **Forest Field Trip to the College Lodge Forest led by Joan Maloof, President of the Old Growth Forest Network (OGFN)**. This is a Life Member ticketed event ($10) and limited to 20 people. Click above for more info and tickets.
Location: carpool to College Lodge Forest near Fredonia, NY

3:30PM **Porch Chat & Book Signing** with Joan Maloof, President of the Old Growth Forest Network.
Location: 25 South Avenue. All are welcome!

The Beaver Brief

Guess what the stork brought to the Chautauqua lake shore this year...

A: Two beaver kits!

(Yup, that's the official and very cute name for beaver babies).

Their mama first announced her presence in May when she beaverized the cherry tree in the photo above. It was on North Lake Drive. It fell a few days after I took that photo on May 25.

I asked Twan Leenders what she was up to and he said something like, "well, she's obviously not trying to dam the lake!" (That was not obvious to me - I thought she might be a beaver-of-very-little-brain). He continued: "she's probably just felling trees to bring the tender leaves down to ground level to eat." Wow!

Since then Jack Gulvin, Dana Lyons, and many others have spotted her swimming around the central dock with her kits and even walking on the hotel lawn.

On a hunt for her lodge the other day I met Austin (pictured above). He led me to the lodge and the entrance hole about 10 feet away from it. (Both are pictured above) Austin used a cattail and Fla-Vor-Ice as his pointer, which I thought was a nice touch. He doesn't know it yet, but that was his first interview to be a future BTG Nature Guide and he blew it away. Keep your eye on this kid, folks - he's going to be on the Smith Wilkes Hall stage one day.

W h a t ' s
a - B u z z ?

Photo caption: An unofficial study suggest that this is perhaps the second most common type of bumblebee in Chautauqua - the *bombas vagans*. It is distinguished by two yellow tergites (roughly translated by me as "stripes").

Photo caption: The bumblebee above is the *bombas impatiens*. It seems to be the most common bumblebee in Chautauqua. It is distinguishable by its one tergite of yellow.

We were in search of the *bombas bimaculata*, which is Ginny's favorite bumblebee and which she had seen on Thursday on this very same buttonbush, but the *bimaculatata* was camera-shy yesterday. Hopefully we can get better photos late in the season of several kinds of bees and their tergites so that you can learn to distinguish them. Until we publish the picture menu, please study up using the text book below, written by our own Dennis McNair, BTG Entomologist.

Pollinators and Other Beneficial Insects

by Dennis McNair, PhD

When most folks think about pollinators they think “honeybees,” but most pollinators are other insects or even from other animal groups.

Before Europeans brought them here, there were no honeybees in North America, but we had lots of flowering plants that required pollination. Some plants (including conifers, grasses or grass-like plants) are wind pollinated, but nearly 90% of our North American plants require animal assistance to distribute

pollen from flower to flower, allowing for fertilization and seed set. Before my European forebears got here, most of that work was done by native bees and flies. Some were pollinated by other insects (e.g. beetles, ants, moths) and a few were pollinated by birds, bats and a few other animals that regularly visit their flowers, but most pollinators (the Xerces Society estimates over 70%*) are native bees and flies.

Honeybees have pollinated many imported and important fruits (apples, almonds, cherries, peaches, etc.) but many of those were brought with us from Europe too. And with the decline of honeybees (colony collapse) caused by insecticides, mites, disease and habitat loss, many fruit growers have turned to some of North America's 4000 species of native bees, such as the Blue Orchard Bee from the family Megachilidae (social nesting honeybees are in the family Apidae) to ensure pollination of fruit crops. For a long time, honeybees have been trucked from orchard to orchard just in time to pollinate blossoms. The Blue Orchard Bees, like most bees native to North America, are solitary in nature, but they don't seem to mind aggregate nesting. In nature each female bee lays her eggs on pollen balls in the hollowed centers of pithy plant stems. People have found that the bees will substitute drinking straws or holes drilled in wooden blocks for plant stems, but local bees should be used to coincide with blossom emergence.

Management techniques for the overwintering of local bees for crops are well established. If you have a backyard apple tree, much less management is necessary, and the bees will love (and pollinate) your tree's blossoms. The downside is that honey isn't produced by these solitary bees.

Flies (order Diptera) pollinate almost as many flowers as bees (order Hymenoptera) do, but, because it's a huge insect group containing species that feed and lay their eggs on rotting tissue and filth, flies have a bad reputation. It's true that house flies and many of their relatives feed on disgusting stuff, vomit on their food to initiate digestion before they eat, and don't distinguish between manure and your mashed potatoes, thus carrying diseases. However, even those repugnant species provide some benefits for us. If it weren't for fly larvae (maggots) and other insects, we'd be hip deep or deeper in dead plants and animals in no time. Meanwhile, most insects display better hygiene and stay away from our dinner plates.

For instance, one large fly family, Syrphidae (the Flower Flies or Hover Flies), contains over 400 species in northeastern North America alone and may account for 40% of flower pollination in our region. Every serious entomologist who studies that family discovers new species, and modern techniques, such as DNA analysis, are separating species that appear identical to the trained and/or microscope-assisted eye. Some species of Flower Flies are generalist and visit a variety of flowers (although they tend to visit the same kind of flowers when that plant species is blooming) but other Flower Flies are specialists, having coevolved with one or a few species of plants and timing their life cycles to benefit both plant and pollinator.

The Flower Flies also often mimic bees and wasps, flower visitors that have venom and can sting. The flies have evolved to resemble their harmful models in color patterns, behavior, and even the sounds they make. I've had students who were so frightened by bees and wasps and so convinced by Flower Fly mimics that they refuse to collect the flies, even after I'd handled them and shown them to be harmless!

The point of all this is to reinforce that human shortsightedness and arrogance – lumping all flies together as spreaders of filth and disease, thinking that only honeybees are beneficial, etc. – can easily cause us to do things that pose a threat to the insects that are crucial to us. Indiscriminate use of insecticides may protect us from real or imagined insect pests, but it also kills insects (and other animals) that we rely upon. Mowing of roadside plants for unessential aesthetic reasons may rob beneficial insects of habitat, food, or nesting materials. The interweaving of various species in our ecosystems has taken thousands or millions of years to evolve and we are capable of destroying that web in a single human generation. Tiny sacrifices on our part can make the difference between balanced coexistence and permanent destruction of both our insect partners and ourselves.

*Percentages like this are always informed estimates. We don't even know how many species of insects there are, and that applies to subgroups in the Class Insecta. If we don't know them, we can't know what each species or group of species does, nor can we make precise comparisons among them.

- Dennis McNair, BTG Entomologist
- photos and bee ID by Ginny Renjilian, bee expert, daughter of Leslie, and (usually willing) tech support and bee identifier to the BTG

What's the Deal?

...with the bird flu and the bird feeders?

Click here to read more, but Cornell now says that song birds are not transmitting the disease, so bird feeders are back on the nice list and you can put them back up if you took them down. (And yes, some of you thought that all along, so now's your chance to say "I told you so!")

Life Member Lunch - August 5 - Click for details and to purchase tickets

Gentle Reader,
I have to believe there are a few typos and maybe worse in this issue, but as Dennis says, "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good!" So I'm hitting send. Please forgive the typos and PLEASE let me know if there are serious errors so I can send a correction. -Leslie