

Garden hints at approaching spring

By Ginny Gregory



Each morning my Welch terrier Chloe and I sit for about 15 minutes or so to watch the birds. I sip my second cup of coffee and she leans over the back of the chair we share as both of us soak in the morning activities. This morning I heard our outdoor bells ringing with urgency. They were announcing a brisk fridge wind that has descended on the garden. This is the struggling time of year for gardeners in Chatham. Today the highs are low 40s, tomorrow it will be warmer by 5 degrees and then by Saturday it will be a warm and balmy 65 degrees. The plants have already started to show growth at the bottom of the stems. That is usually the sign of when to cut back the old dead wood on many plants, but recently I have been hearing an inner voice saying,

"Slow down. Wait. The time will soon be here."

I always feel an urgency this time of year to start because my heart and soul are so connected with my garden. When I get out of my car coming in late from working on someone else's garden, my garden greets me with open familiar arms. I am home. It is quirky, alive, often messy but there is always something going on for me to enjoy. I have been pondering organizing the basement to accommodate more activities. As I turned the corner of the garden steps leading down below the house, I was greeted with snow drops. Pure white dainty drooping blooms with a delicate green cap painted on each one. They sit about six inches high and sway in the breeze. I totally forgot the basement assessment when my eyes landed on the flowers.

Lost in the snow drops I remembered that I needed to clip for alter

flowers. What in the world would be available for the cutting? With clippers in hand I wandered around noticing the Mt. Fuji spiraea that was popping open looking like mini twinkling



snowflakes. Snip. Horse tails are always fun to play with in any arrangement. They are one of the oldest plants known. They are hollow reeds that bend perfectly at each joint that goes up the stem. Snip. Snip.

Scarlet nandina leaves grabbed me as I traveled up into the greenhouse

terraces as did the glistening yellow stem dogwood. Snip. Snip. Snip. I cut some creamy washed ligustrum leaves to give some foundation to the collection. When I put the arrangements together, they looked a bit like sticks. They were abstract, not symmetrical, a presentation straight from the garden. These were not going to be the usual alter flowers. This collection was the subtle announcement of spring sneaking in to warm our hearts. We have been talking about "radical welcome" at St. Bart's. We are exploring the notion of open hearts and open souls to all to pass through our lives. The congregation saw sticks...or did they? Inspiration comes in waves to warm our hearts. Seize the moment!

Ginny Gregory is the owner and creative energy behind "Beyond The Pail...Creating Gardens and Beyond". She is also starting an organizing, decluttering, down sizing business. For info, see www.beyondthepail.net

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SLAVE POET

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family friend and editor of the influential Raleigh Register. Gales published a few biographical facts and eight stanzas of "On the Evening and Morning", which were copied by the Free Press in Tarborough.

A reader, Mr. Pigmy Homer, was moved to write to James Horton to determine if George Moses could be freed. James replied that at the close of the farming season he might be inclined to take a fair price for his slave. In spite of a campaign by the Freedman's Journal in New York sufficient funds were not raised.

In 1829 George's friends tried to raise funds by publishing a 22 page edition of his work in Raleigh, including "The Slaves' Complaint", but the book was not widely sold.

James Horton allowed George more and more freedom and he spent every Sunday in Chapel Hill. He even was on friendly terms with UNC President Caldwell. George was allowed to purchase more free time, even though this was prohibited by legislative decree.

In 1843 James Horton died and ownership passed to Hall Horton who

charged fifty cents a day for not working. In time the local appeal of George's poems declined and he had to work around the campus and dormitories to supplement his income.

When the students marched off to the Civil War his income declined drastically, but George was in Chapel Hill when the 9th Michigan Cavalry occupied the town. Captain Will H. S. Banks met Horton, admired his work, and became his confidant. Eventually Captain Banks arranged with a Raleigh publisher to produce George Moses Horton's "Naked Genius" in 1865.

In 1866 Horton went to Philadelphia where he remained until his death in 1883. He is memorialized by a highway marker at Route 15/501 and Mt. Gilead Church Road.

Sources for this article: The Black Poet-The Story of George Moses Horton A North Carolina Slave by Richard Walser; Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, edited by Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris; Chatham County 1771-1971 by Hadley, Horton, Strowd.

Fred J. Vatter is past president of Chatham County Historical Association and a board member.

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