



Lanark Orchid Renals

Perth & District Horticultural Society

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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association

April 2010 Newsletter

My garden
will never make
me famous,
I'm a
horticultural
ignoramus.
Ogden Nash



Plant Sale

We made it through yet another winter – now comes spring – now comes the plant sale. Every year the Society asks members to donate plants from their gardens for the sale. The business of the Society is handled by volunteers but the Society does need funds to carry out various functions. The costs of the Society include printing expenses, speaker fees, costs for the social activities, supplies for the Junior Gardeners program, etc.

This is our major fundraiser of the year. As you begin another year in the garden and divide your plants, please keep the sale in mind. Put one up for us! The sale will be held May 22 and we'd be happy to receive your plants the evening of May 21. Pots can be obtained just by asking.

Junior Gardeners

On Tuesday, April 6, the Grade 5/6 French students at The Stewart School, participated in a project to enter into the Youth section of Ottawa Blooms, being held in Kanata at the end of April.

They were asked to create an imaginary or real garden using pressed flowers, leaves, coloured pencils, etc., and glue on card stock. Another section was a poem written by Chief Dan George. The students were asked to print the poem and then add descriptive drawings to illustrate it. The students worked hard and the results were very impressive.

The Junior Gardeners program, which involves students from Grades 3 to 6, began at four Perth and area schools on Thursday, and lasts for six weeks. Once again we thank the generosity of Perth Home Hardware and Canadian Tire for the donation of soil and seeds.

Janet Cain,
Junior Gardeners Co-ordinator.

May Flower Show

1. Tulip - 1 stem
2. Tulips - 3 stems of one cultivar
3. Narcissus trumpet - 3 scapes
4. Narcissus small cup - 3 scapes
5. Narcissus large cup - 3 scapes
6. Narcissus double - 3 scapes
7. Flowering branch no more than 24" above table
8. "Going Dutch" - a design using tulips

Work Smarter

with a little hard-won wisdom from the pros

1. Let all your planning ahead be for your plants; a year ahead for annuals, two years ahead for the biennials, an indefinite number of years ahead for the trees. - *Christopher Lloyd*
2. Walk through your garden to scout for insects and diseases at least once per week; caught early, problems are easier to treat.
- *Stephen Westcott-Gratton*
3. Try to get a plant in the right place the first time around. Given the proper conditions, the plant will be happy and you'll save yourself a lot of transplanting work. - *Karen York*
4. Never plant trees that will become large with age too close to your house.
- *Stephen Westcott-Gratton*
5. Consider your garden private territory. Critics are not welcome! Be honest about what you want, and don't be concerned with what others may see. If you like woody plants, design a four-season shrub border. Besotted with peonies? Make a peony walk. Grow plenty of what you love; you don't need an excuse for excess. Are there ever too many rose petals?
- *Judith Adam*
6. Set your lawn mower blades at 7.5 centimetres or higher, and allow your



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lawn to go dormant during periods of drought.

- *Stephen Westcott-Gratton*

7. Light in a garden is a quarter of the battle. Another quarter is the soil of the garden. A third quarter is the skill and care of the gardener. The fourth quarter is luck. Indeed, one might say that these were the four Ls of gardening, in the following order of importance: Loam, Light, Love and Luck. - *Beverley Nichols*

8. Don't be afraid of change. Gardens, and gardeners, are always evolving. It's part of the process so step in boldly and revamp that rockery, yank out those overgrown shrubs or transform that border into a veggie garden, a pond, a knot garden – wherever your imagination takes you. - *Karen York*

9. Always spend five minutes doing some warm up stretches and bends before undertaking strenuous garden work, and never do one task for too long at a time. - *Stephen Westcott-Gratton*

10. Climbers are among the most useful plants in any garden. They take up little ground space, and they can be employed for many purposes: to clothe a boring fence, to scramble over a dead tree, to frame an archway, to drape a wall, to disguise a shed, or to climb lightly onto a pergola. They demand comparatively little attention, once they have taken hold of their support, maybe a yearly pruning or a kindly rescue if they have come adrift in a gale. - *Vita Sackville-West*

Treasurer's Report

February 1 to February 28, 2010

Balance January 31, 2010 \$3,723.23

Receipts:

Miscellaneous	\$75.00	
Bank interest	<u>.01</u>	
	75.01	\$75.01

Expenses:

Speaker Fees	\$ 75.00	
	<u>\$75.00</u>	\$75.00

Balance February 28, 2010 \$3,723.24

Bank Balance February 28, 2010 \$1,223.24

Reserve Fund	<u>2,500.00</u>	
	\$3,723.24	

Spring Checklist

Cross these essential chores, from pruning to pest control, off your list

Gardeners know that the growing season doesn't begin on a warm morning in May—there is much to be done while frost still lingers in the ground. In the lengthening days of earliest spring, we should be up and about the potting shed, getting ready for the planting rush. Making tools ready, mixing up custom fertilizers and organizing irrigation equipment are practical matters we can accomplish before the buds break. Instead of trying to catch up, an early start puts us in confident control of the gardening season.

Prune summer-flowering shrubs

To avoid wasting potential blossoms, it's important to have the first big surge of spring growth going into productive wood. These plants make their flowers on new wood:

Roses - Remove dead wood and shorten sections of living wood that are slimmer than a pencil (they won't have enough strength to hold up the flowers).

Hydrangea - Cut back canes and branches of *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' (sometimes called hills of snow) and *H. paniculata* 'Grandiflora' (a.k.a. PeeGee), 'Unique' and 'Tardiva' by about half their lengths.

Spirea - Shorten stems of low-growing *Spiraea japonica* ('Anthony Waterer', 'Bumalda', 'Goldflame', 'Gold Mound' and 'Little Princess', for example) by two-thirds their lengths.

Rose of Sharon - If shortening is required, remove up to one-third its height before new growth begins.

Clematis - Cut back last year's growth before buds break. If you're unsure of what pruning category your clematis is in, it's safe to cut back by half the plant's height.

Ensure soil fertility

Prepare a quick-start growth stimulant for perennial plants—try a mix of equal parts blood, bone and kelp meals—and scratch 125 millilitres into the soil around each plant's root system.

Alfalfa weed or pellets (from an animal feed company or pet shop) will also supply growth hormones and can be used with the growth stimulant described above. Apply 125 grams to small perennials, 250 grams to large perennials and 500 to 750 grams to shrubs.

Purchase seed of Dutch white clover (*Trifolium repens*) at a garden centre and broadcast it in lawns—about 250 grams per 100 square metres. Clover fixes nitrogen in the soil, crowds out weeds and strengthens the lawn against drought. It won't strangle grass plants, but it will fill in where grass is patchy.

Irrigation preparation

Purchase soaker hoses and position them in beds and around shrubs before perennial plants and groundcovers begin growing.

Patch punctured rubber hoses and replace all plastic washers with non-leaking rubber ones.

Avoid unnecessary water evaporation by setting in-ground irrigation systems to come on in the early morning, before sunrise.

Check up on plant supports

Put peony rings in place before growth begins.

Set up stakes and netting for garden peas before planting the seeds.

Tighten or replace wire supports for raspberry and grape canes before buds break.

Pest control essentials

Collect blackspot-affected leaves from around roses before spring rains reintroduce disease spores.

Collect leaves infected with apple scab from under

crabapple trees to avoid a new outbreak.

Before leaf buds break, spray still-dormant roses, magnolias and woody shrubs (except yews, and Japanese and sugar maples) with dormant oil to smother scale insects. Apply spray in the morning when a very cold night is not expected.

Pre-summer lawn care

As soon as the earth is firm, use a leaf rake to remove light thatch and leaf debris from all lawn areas. For areas of deep thatch, use a special prong-type thatch rake. Put the removed organic material under shrubs and hedges as a mulch to conserve moisture and insulate the roots from summer heat.

Once soil is no longer waterlogged, aerate lawns with a core aerator machine that removes five-centimetre-long plugs of soil to improve oxygen access to the root zone.

Top-dress lawns before they begin growing with a mixture of aged manure, peat moss, shredded leaves (if available) or purchased triple mix in a 2.5-centimetre layer.

Tools and equipment basics

Take lawn mower blades to a professional sharpening service. Dull blades make ragged cuts and invite turfgrass diseases. Also sharpen snub-nosed spades and round shovels.

Check tires of wheelbarrows and repair wheel punctures, add air to flat tires and tighten nuts and bolts.

Clean the cutting blades of pruners with steel wool to remove dried sap.

Test the pond pump in a bucket of water to be sure it works properly after winter storage.

Brush out clinging soil from containers and terracotta pots, then soak them for 30 minutes in a solution of one part chlorine bleach to nine parts water to eliminate pathogens.

Canadiangardening online

Compost Tea

Compost tea is a fertilizer to soak into the soil or spray directly on plant foliage. It contains beneficial organisms, nutrients and many other compounds. Spraying plants with compost tea may prevent or reduce certain disease problems.

To make compost tea, put two cups of compost (to one gallon of water) in a burlap bag, cheesecloth or old pillowcase. Let it steep in the water for 24 hours. If necessary, dilute it to the colour of weak tea. Spread the solid contents in your garden or return to your compost pile.

*Julie Ferraro, certified horticulturist
from Barrie, ON*

Repotting Your House Plants

Sharon Lance, Adams County Master Gardener

There is never a wrong time to repot your houseplants, but this time of year we have more time in the house to evaluate our plants needs, if any. Some plants need to be repotted every year at a specific time, often in the spring as they begin a new growth period. Some signs that your plants needs to be repotted are stunted foliage, smaller leaf growth, plants wilting between watering, lower leaves are yellow, roots appear at the soils surface or grow thru the drainage holes.

Repotting your plants is a relatively easy task. You will need new or clean used pots, sterilized soil medium and gravel or small pebbles and a new or used sterilized container.

Flower Pots: Clay and unglazed ceramic pots allow the plant's roots to breath, but also loose their moisture more quickly than plastic pots, which are not porous. For plants that need to dry out between watering, like cactus and other succulents, a clay pot would be a better choice. If you elect to use a clay pot make sure that the pot has been conditioned by immersing it in water for several hours before use. Clay pots that haven't been conditioned draw water from soil and rob the plant of its moisture. Used clay pots should be washed to remove soluble salts and sterilized by immersing in a solution of 1 part liquid bleach to 9 parts water. Rinse well. Also, clay and glazed pots are heavier and work better when planting large or taller plants.

Plastic and glazed ceramic pots hold moisture longer and are preferred for plants that need a lot of water and like even moisture, such as miniature roses. They should have a drainage hole or a layer of rock or pebbles in the bottom of the pot to hold the extra water that is unable to drain. Plastic pots are easy to sterilize and tend to accumulate fewer salts.

The flowerpot you select should be large enough to provide room for soil, the root ball, have sufficient headroom for proper watering and provide bottom drainage. Also the pot you selected for repotting should not be more than 2 inches larger in diameter than the pot it is growing in. If the flowerpot is too large in relation to the plant, the soil will dry out slowly and it will be difficult to control the moisture. The top of the soil may be dry to the touch while the soil in the center of the pot may still be wet. Also, for drainage holes in your container that are large you can use wire mesh, pieces of broken



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shards, stones, a coffee filter or even a bottle cap can be used to limit the loss of soil/nutrients from excess water drainage.

Potting Medium: Besides anchoring the plant, potting soil serves many purposes. It acts as a reservoir for nutrients and if the structure is correct will achieve balance between moisture, air and be a host to beneficial micro-organisms. Many of the commercial mixes contain no soil but slow-release fertilizers such as perlite, which is a sterile material produced from heating volcanic rock, vermiculite, which is a sterile, lightweight mica product, and sphagnum peat moss which is partially degraded vegetable matter found in marshy areas. A good potting mix or soil should be porous for root aeration and drainage but also be able to retain moisture and nutrients. There are many high-quality potting mixes on the market and many of the new soilless mixes come with water soluble materials in the mixes. Another option is to mix your own potting soil using 2 part garden loam; 1 part leaf mold or peat moss and one part sand, perlite or vermiculite.

To repot your plant start by supporting your plant with one hand while tapping it out of the pot or you may need to invert the pot and tap the rim on a hard surface. One suggestion before you repot your plant is to water your plant the day before or several hours before you repot your plant so that all of the soil ball will be uniformly moistened and easier to remove from the existing pot. Next, position the root ball so that it is at the same level it was previously growing; adjust the soil mix as needed to fill in the sides of the pot. Firm the potting soil with your fingers making sure that you allow a ½ to 1" opening between the top of the soil and the rim of the pot to allow space for watering. When the pot is full, thump down on solid surface to firm down the soil. It is important to firm the soil around the root ball because new soil is always lighter and airier than the soil ball in which the plant has been growing. If the new soil hasn't been firmed down, any water added to the plant will quickly wash away through the new soil and the roots may not be sufficiently moistened. Water plant thoroughly but never let water sit in a container after it drains. The plant should be set in a location with sufficient light, but not sunny, for a couple of days until the plant has had time to adjust to being repotted. During the next couple of weeks the plant will develop feeder roots and root hair roots a process that requires air and water in the soil. So be careful not to over water the plant.

When you are ready to repot your plants take a close look for signs to see if your houseplant needs to be repotted. Determine the size of the container, keeping in mind the general rule is to select a pot that is 1 to 2 inches larger than the pot the plant is currently growing in. Purchase a good quality soil mix or you can make your own. After you have repotted you plant(s) make sure the soil has been firmed down, sufficiently

watered, and place in indirect sun light for a couple of days to adjust to being repotted. Enjoy.

Write It Down

by Diana Roberts, *northerngarden.ca*

Every spring we start out with a new outlook on gardening, knowing that this year will be the best year ever. Our hanging baskets will look better than ever because we know what went wrong last year. Our gardens will not have the same weeds as last year because we have a better plan for keeping them weed-free.

Right. And we all know that we are dreaming because by next spring we will have forgotten all our good intentions and we will make the same mistakes all over again. How are we ever going to remember all the little things that would make our gardening easier, quicker and our gardens more spectacular? My suggestion is to keep a gardening diary. This is something you should do all summer long, not just at the end of the year. Write down those good ideas that you may forget, and wish that you could remember.

For many years I was so busy that I wouldn't get my garden in 'til late June or early July, so by fall things were just starting to produce well. My thought was that I would take the time out of my busy schedule and just do it next year. As they say, the best laid plans of mice and men....Time to get out my calendar and pencil in the weekend for planting my garden.

Was your deck in need of more accents? Was your patio a little too bland and in need of more color? Would some fragrant scents have added that little bit of extra that you needed? Will you remember all of these things when you start gardening again?

If your decks and patios were a little sparse last year, why not go out and invest in a few more large pots, then plant them up and group them together for a spectacular look! When you choose plants for your pots, include varieties with varying heights as well as complementary colors, textures and leaf shapes. Also choose plants which bloom at varying times, as there are some which will only open up in the sun or late in the day.

Hanging baskets are also something to consider carefully. For them to look their best, it takes some work. Remember that their roots are in a completely different environment than plants grown in your garden. The roots of hanging baskets are not able to grow to the moisture; they depend entirely on what you supply to them. Baskets made with moss will dry out more quickly than plastic baskets will, as the wind will blow right through them.

Now, let's get a paper and pencil out and make those notes. There are always things that you want to change in your garden, but forget from year to year.