



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District Horticultural Society

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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association

April 2011 Newsletter

Most people don't see the sun, soil, bugs, seeds, plants, moon, water, clouds, and wind the way gardeners do.

~Jamie Jobb

President's Pen

Let's face it, after a long, cold winter, there is increased excitement watching the snow recede and our gardens once again beginning to take centre stage. I am always impressed by the grape hyacinths which shoot their foliage up in the fall and make it through the winter to come out unscathed each spring, none the worse for wear. Something also happens that is not quite so impressive. Glancing across my lawn I could make dark lumps and trails of earth and it was very obvious what I was again facing - voles and moles! Those little critters seem to concentrate on a different part of the lawn each winter leaving their obvious feeding trails as the snow recedes. I have found the most effective way for handling the damage is to just step on each hill/tunnel and flatten it outwards. The grass seems to handle the extra soil very well, is not smothered and the intricate tunnels are no more, at least for another year. I have learned that while moles make "volcanic" style eruptions in the lawn, voles make tunnels, about 2 inches across, connected and running just under the top of the lawn. Both are looking for grubs, grass shoots, worms and adult insects. Moles are opportunists and will make use of the tunnels voles have created. I have stood at the end of a tunnel and watched a little (OK, he wasn't so little) critter come out and peer around. I was surprised he was not put off by my presence and didn't seem at all worried. They don't see well, are sensitive to touch and I assumed possess a good sense of smell, but he was definitely not aware of me. I'm not going to share any instructions on how to get rid of them apart from recommending having a cat or two around. I figure that they are part of the garden and they, too, have to eat. The good news is, they aren't through the garden, just making a heck of a mess of a portion of the lawn.

See you in the garden, *Lynda*



Upcoming

- **May 10:** "Gladiolus" Speaker: Roger Blockley
- **May 21:** Annual Plant Sale
- **June 14:** Open Forum with the Master Gardeners and Summer Social Evening

Junior Gardeners

The Junior Gardeners' volunteers, would like to thank the many people who brought in plant cuttings, strawberry containers, tuna cans, styrofoam trays and gifts bags. They were much appreciated. We would also like to request that members continue to bring in their Canadian Tire "funny money". It is put to good use, buying seeds and soil.

Janet Cain

Last Chance For Rain Barrels!

Water has been called the "liquid gold" of the twenty-first century. 30-40% of the water used during the summer months is used for lawn and garden maintenance. Harvesting rain water for use during dry months in a container of some form is an ancient practice and is relevant once again.

Just look outside your window the next time it rains and imagine all the water that is running off your roof or down the driveway, being put to beneficial use in your garden. Rain barrels are a part of the solution.

Rain water tends to have fewer sediments and dissolved salts than municipal water or well water, making



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Secretary: Pam Pratt

Newsletter: Pam Pratt, Irene Hofmann

it ideal for watering plants or even car washing or cleaning windows. Did you know that for every inch of rain that falls on a 1000 square foot roof, nearly 600 gallons of water can be collected?

Rain water collection will enable you to lower your water bill. Reduce strain on your well and the municipal water supply, protect the environment and make your plants very happy. All this for the price of a barrel under the downspout!

April is disappearing fast and our PDHS/Lanark Master Gardeners rain barrel sale will take place on April 30, 2011 at Rock Wall Gardens.

You still have time to order one or two. Order your rain barrels before April 23 at www.rainbarrel.ca/lanark or call 613-283-1032. Over 78 barrels have been ordered so far and are a steal at \$60 for non-members and \$55 for members after a \$5.00 rebate. The rebate can be obtained at the sale by showing your membership cards. Check out the PDHS website at perthhortsociety.com or the Lanark Master Gardeners website at lanarkmastergardeners.mgoi.ca for online ordering information. If you prefer to talk to someone about the sale feel free to telephone 613-283-1032.

“Grow A Row” For The Food Bank

The Perth and District Food Bank is hoping you will add an extra row when growing vegetables this year and donate them to the Food Bank. Fresh produce is an essential component of a healthy diet, but is not donated frequently enough to supply food bank clients. Grow a Row is an excellent way to provide low income people with access to fresh local produce and really doesn't take much extra work in your garden. So when you come to plant your carrots, tomatoes, squash, beans and more, try and sow an extra row for the food bank.

May Flower Show

Our in-house flower show for May features spring flowers, asparagus, and a miniature design. These flower shows are open to all members no matter how experienced a gardener you may be. You may be pleasantly surprised to find that your specimen is worthy of a ribbon. This is the schedule for May:

Section 1: Horticultural Specimen

Class 1 - Tulip, 1 stem

Class 2 - Tulips, 3 stems of one cultivar

Class 3 - Narcissus, trumpet, 3 scapes

Class 4 - Narcissus, small cup, 3 scapes

Class 5 - Narcissus, large cup, 3 scapes

Class 6 - Narcissus double, 3 scapes

Class 7 - Flowering branch, no more than 24" above table

Class 8 - Any Iris in bloom, 1 spike

Class 9 - Asparagus, 3 stalks

Section II: Design

Class 10 - “Victoria’s Tiny Secret” – a miniature design

Class 11 - “A Walk in the Woods” – a design using spring flowers and decorative wood.

Show rules can be found starting on page 6 of your 2011 Yearbook. Linda Bartlett and Madeleine Archer are also an excellent source of information. Good Luck!

Treasurer’s Report

February 1 to February 28, 2011

Balance January 31, 2011	\$2,914.18
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Receipts:

Grants	\$1,000.00	
Memberships	240.00	
Bank Interest	.01	
Miscellaneous	120.00	
Non-members Fees	18.00	
	\$1,378.01	\$1,378.01

Expenses:

Speaker Fees	\$ 75.00	
	\$75.00	\$75.00

Balance February 28, 2011	\$4,217.19
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Bank Balance February 28, 2011	\$1,742.50
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Reserve Fund	2,500.00
	\$4,242.50

Outstanding cheques	\$(25.31)
	\$4,217.19

Gardening in Ethiopia

By Wynne White

Note: Wynne White is a long-time Perth resident and former teacher at PDCI. She is currently a volunteer with VSO. Approximately two years ago, when she was assigned to Ethiopia to teach, she approached then PDHS President, Marilyn Devolin, with a request to the PDHS membership to provide her with vegetable seeds since none were available at local stores at the time. Marilyn did so and the response from you, our members, was overwhelming. The following is Wynne’s story of gardening in Ethiopia.

Much of Africa is dry and unbearably hot. For example, the second largest city in Ethiopia, Dire Dawa, is 40 km from where I lived. It’s on the edge of a desert, hot and dusty, definitely suitable for camels, but not much else. In contrast, if I climb up to highland plateaus nearby, the climate is cooler, rainier and more suitable for growing vegetables, coffee and chat (more of this later).

Daytime temperatures in the highlands are in the high 20s – and it can go to a chilly 8 at night. The hottest time of year is in April, the coolest in Dec/Jan. The rainy season is between June and September

when it's cool and sloppy – in the countryside, roads are impassable, in the city, the roads are almost impassable as the drains don't drain and garbage-filled ditches overflow. Happily, there are leaves on the trees and flowers all year long, especially after the rainy season, and a variety of food crops thrive throughout the year during the two growing seasons – April and September.

I lived in the highland area for 2 years while I worked at a university. My medium-sized yard was surrounded by tall flowering shrubs, poinsettia bushes as well as eucalyptus, jacaranda and banana trees.

The vegetable garden consisted of 8 raised beds about 6' x 8' each, well dug and enhanced with fertilizer from the nearby barns. Dessu, my gardener cum house cleaner, managed all the digging, planting and watering and I shared the produce with his family of 5. All the beds were not always planted; some were left to rest and some were rotated. He had worked for foreigners before and was very happy when I brought cucumber and radish seeds from Canada – apparently not common in our area.

The most successful plantings were potatoes, carrots and beans although the beans once suffered from some root sucking insects and another time, aphids. Dessu wanted to grow tomatoes, but the locally available ones were so good and cheap that it seemed not worth effort. Lettuce grew well, but was well loved by the friendly, neighbourhood mouse birds who excelled at digging under the protective

chicken wire cages we made. At one time, I had two types of lettuce, A and B. The mouse birds ate A and ignored B. In a fit of cleverness, we planted only B the next time. The mouse birds then ate B!

Cucumbers struggled, bearing only a few small fruits; in contrast, zucchinis were large and prolific. Carrots were especially crisp and sweet – a far cry from their store-bought cousins in Canada!

Water availability was key to a successful garden and certainly the plants preferred rain to a daily, late afternoon watering from the hose. In the dry season, we watered, but I always felt guilty doing this knowing that families nearby had water in their homes only a few hours per day, or, were carrying it from an outdoor tap, just to wash themselves or flush their toilets.

The small, tasty bananas took a long time to mature. When I left in early December, they were nearly ready. They all ripen at once, so for a single person, it was a good time to have a party with the stalk of bananas as the centrepiece on the dinner table.

Traditionally, Ethiopia has been famous for its excellent coffee, bringing in well over 300 million dollars each year. Recently, chat has been catching up! So, what is chat?

Chat is a bush, 3 to 4 feet in height, that grows in well tended rows in the highlands of eastern Ethiopia. The branches are harvested daily so that folks may eat the fresh, tender leaves. The consumption of the leaves produces an elated, euphoric, mellow state – and – the leaves are addictive.



Ask A Master Gardener

Dear Master Gardeners:

What the heck is Corn Gluten? I have heard I can use it to help prevent weeds in my lawn. Can you help?

Thanks, Gluten for Punishment

Dear Gluten:

Corn Gluten Meal (CGM) is a by product of milling corn in the production of corn syrup. It is a pre-emergent herbicide and a natural source of nitrogen. CGM contains 10% nitrogen (10-0-0). It is available as a fine yellow powder or in pellets and used to control crabgrass, dandelions, knotweed, pigweed and plantain (does this sound like your lawn?). While it is best to apply CGM 3 times a year, the spring and fall applications are most important. Fall application prevents weed root systems from establishing before winter while the spring application controls

germination of weed seeds from the previous fall. Make the first application in early spring after the snow has melted. It is effective for 6 weeks so do not plant grass seed within 6 weeks of applying CGM or use CGM until newly planted grass seed has germinated as it will prevent grass seed from germinating too. To apply, use a fertilizer spreader. Water the grass thoroughly after application to press it into the soil surface and then let it dry. CGM has been packaged by many of the suppliers who brought us weed and feed type of products. It is also available in bulk from local feed stores and farmers co-ops.

Lanark County Master Gardeners

If you have any questions, send an email to lanarkmg@gmail.com or call Dale 264-8135, Renai 267-7272 or Kevin 279-2098.

Traditionally, chat is chewed after lunch, usually by men, as they stretch out on mattresses. It's washed down with liberal amounts of water. It must be an acquired taste – I found the leaves to have the taste and texture of old lettuce and couldn't chew enough to reach the longed for 'euphoric state'.

Unfortunately, this cultural practice is having a devastating effect on the local people. Some children begin chewing at an early age – and by the time they reach secondary school, they're quite unmotivated to learn as they plan simply to carry on the family business.

The nearby town of Awaady is the centre of the chat trade in Ethiopia. It's an unpleasant place, hopping at any time of the day or night as buying and selling of bundles of chat goes on 24 hours per day. Those 'under the influence' are staggering about, stretched out in doorway or lounging on the mattresses of 'chat rooms' while the women spread bundles of chat on the ground and bargain noisily. The whole scene is like something from Dante's Inferno.

Chat growing also requires a lot of water, and formerly shallow lakes which used to be fairly common in the area and filled with fish, are now mostly dry, as the water is taken to irrigate the chat.

Overall, the fresh garden produce in Ethiopia was excellent. In big towns such as Dire Dawa, there was a greater variety of fruit and vegetables available, but even in our small, local, colourful, afternoon/candlelit evening market, there was a good choice most of the time.

As for the university, it is located on a large property where fields of beans, potatoes, grain and corn were grown to help feed the 14,000 students who attend. They also raise beef cattle, milk cows, chickens and pigs – although the pigs are not all that popular with the local people who are mostly Muslim or Coptic Christians, and thus the consumption of pork is taboo for them. However, we few foreigners enjoyed the pork at about \$.20 per kilo!

Obviously there are large parts of Ethiopia that are not suitable for growing food crops. Nomads living in the desert areas herd camels and make charcoal for a living. Scrubby bushes provide wood for the dome shaped, clay, charcoal kilns – but this activity does not appear to be sustainable as the wood becomes more and more scarce.

Living in Ethiopia was a wonderful experience and although it has the reputation for being dry and prone to famine, it can also be lush and productive: it certainly depends on where you are.



From Fabric to Garden

One of the easiest ways to put together an effective colour scheme in a container or in the garden is to use a piece of fabric as a model. If you love the colours in your tablecloth, you will love them translated into flowers and foliage.

Global Bee Emergency

Quietly, globally, billions of bees are dying, threatening our crops and food. But a global ban of one group of pesticides could save bees from extinction.

Four European countries have begun banning these poisons, and some bee populations are recovering. But chemical companies are lobbying hard to keep all killer pesticides on the market. A global outcry now for a ban in the US and EU, where debate is raging, could provoke a total ban and a ripple effect around the world.

Let's build a giant global buzz calling for these dangerous chemicals to be outlawed in the US and EU until and unless they are proved to be safe. Sign the petition to save bees and our crops and send this to everyone: https://secure.avaaz.org/en/save_the_bees/

What You Can Do

- Plant a pollinator-friendly garden
http://pollinationcanada.ca/?n=pc_lib_pfg
- Don't use pesticides or chemical fertilizers
<http://google.ca/search?q=organic+gardening>
- Naturalize / plant native flowers in your yard
<http://google.ca/search?q=wildflowers>
- Become a backyard beekeeper

<http://google.ca/search?q=backyard+beekeeping>

- Support conservation, biodiversity
<http://planetfriendly.net/dontpave.html#links>
- Avoid industrial food and GMOs – buy local organic
<http://planetfriendly.net/organic.html#food>
- Be a pollinator observer
http://pollinationcanada.ca/?n=pc_be_an_observer
- Learn more and get involved
http://planetfriendly.net/wiki/?title=Save_the_Bees
- Live sustainably. It's all connected.

More Groups, Organizations, Resources

- Pollination Canada – pollinating insects are “essential for over a billion dollars of apples, pears, cucumbers, melons, berries, and many other kinds of Canadian farm produce.” www.pollinationcanada.ca/
- North American Pollinator Protection Campaign
<http://pollinator.org/nappc/>
- Pollinator Partnership <http://pollinator.org/>
Canada: http://pollinationcanada.ca/?n=pc_partners
North America: <http://pollinator.org/nappc/partners.htm>

(warning: might include government partners with vested interests in corporate, pesticide-intensive agriculture)