



Lanark Orchid Renals

Perth & District Horticultural Society

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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association

January 2010 Newsletter

From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens - the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye.

- Katherine S. White



President's Pen, January, 2010

I am so excited to take on the position of President of this important town and community resource, i.e. The Perth & District Horticultural Society. While being a member for 4 years and on the Board for one, I have a lot to learn but I am ready, willing and able. Thankfully I have a dynamic group of people with a lot of know-how backing me up. I am very excited to be working with this group of committed people. I need to let you know that I will be in Charleston, South Carolina for January and February and I am hoping you will forgive my absence for that time frame.

A little back ground: my husband Arthur (who is not a gardener but he sure can cook!) and I, have three grown daughters, including a set of twins. We had the luck and delight to purchase Evelyn and Gordon Bothwell's farm six years ago and inherited a marvelous garden in the process. Gordon was a Master Gardener and worked 30 years on making their garden a special place to be. Evelyn's focus were the gardens around the house. All this to say, we couldn't be happier in this healing place and we count ourselves very fortunate indeed.

I am hoping to entice you to complete a survey about your Hort Society (available at the January meeting) and to let us know what works, and more importantly, what doesn't work for you. The Hort Society is now 25 years old in its renewed shape and has etched out an important supportive position within Perth. I am hoping to enhance that position, and, with my team, forge new relationships in our town. Please leave your completed survey with a Board member at one of the General Meetings. We look forward to hearing from you.

Have a Safe, Happy and Healthy 2010.

Meet you in the garden,

Lynda

New Year's Resolutions for Gardeners

By Dale Odorizzi

As the old year ends and the new year begins, many of us make resolutions as to how we can improve our lives and our health. This is also a good time to make resolutions about how we can improve our gardens. I have included some areas you can consider and different levels of "resolutions" you might want to consider.

Garden Rehabilitation—This year I vow to (a) review the notes I made in my Gardening Journal about plants that need dividing and areas or times of years that need a boost and act on those actions; (b) make notes during the gardening season about plants that need dividing or about areas I would like to improve on next year; (c) cut back the weeds that have grown taller than my plants.

Compost—this year I vow to (a) add organic material to my existing compost pile and turn the pile 2 times a month; (b) build a compost pile,



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using my kitchen waste and organic materials from my garden; (c) buy a bag of compost and put it around my Peonies and delphiniums.

Learning—this year I vow to (a) enrol in a gardening course; (b) join the local Horticultural Society and attend the meetings; (c) call or visit a Master Gardener about one of your gardening questions.

Reading—this year I vow to (a) buy and read a new gardening book or subscribe to a gardening magazine; (b) borrow and read a gardening book or magazine from the local library; (c) buy and read one gardening magazine.

Nature—this year I vow to (a) obtain Canadian Wildlife Backyard Habitat Certification for my garden; (b) plant bird or butterfly friendly plants in my garden; (c) accept that you need caterpillars to get butterflies.

Lawns—this year I vow to (a) replace some of my lawn with flower or vegetable gardens; (b) learn non-chemical methods for maintaining my lawn; (c) embrace the fact that weeds in my lawn help to keep it green in the summer, can be pretty when they bloom and are butterfly and bird attractors.

Vegetables—this year I vow to (a) grow a good portion of my own vegetables; (b) plant a few vegetables in containers; (c) visit the local Farmers Markets often to buy local produce.

Regardless of how many or level of these resolutions you wish to embrace, there is one resolution that I hope all gardeners will make and keep.

I vow to enjoy my garden and feel proud of what I have done and not feel inadequate for what I have not yet done.

Happy New Year and Happy Gardening!

Junior Gardeners

We will be starting our Junior Gardeners Program again in April. I would like to ask members if they could start cuttings from their indoor plants for the “plant library”. The students take a plant home each week and learn how to care for it and note the changes in their journals. If they are started early then they will be well established in April when we start the program. *Janet Cain*

Living Locally Fair

The Russell and District Horticultural Society, in partnership with St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School, is holding a Living Locally Fair on Saturday, January 16, 2010 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It is held at St. Thomas Aquinas at 1211 South Russell Road in Russell. There is no admission fee but we gratefully

accept donations for the food bank. Last year we had about 40 vendors and over 800 visitors. This year, so far, we have 45 vendors and still more to confirm. Our aim is to highlight the wonderful producers in our community, to give voice to those groups who help make our community what it is and to have an opportunity to educate on good environmental practices and products. (This is not a craft fair—most products are for “in or on our bodies” and are produced locally). We would love to have you join us. For more information as it becomes available go to www.russellgardeners.ca.

Seed Tapes

In the lull before the frenzy of spring, making seed tapes saves you time and effort at planting, and you’ll have straight, perfectly spaced rows.

You will need:

- Newspaper
- Flour
- Water
- Seeds

What you do:

1. Tear newspaper from top to bottom into 1-inch wide strips. Avoid pages with colour.

2. Make a paste by mixing water with 1/2 cup flour until it is the consistency of thick gravy.

3. Lay the strips on a table and place a single row of seeds along each one, measuring out recommended spacing distances as you go.

4. Glue the seeds to the strips by placing a dollop of flour water on top of each seed. You can use a teaspoon, cotton swab or toothpick to dole out the paste.

5. Let the glue dry, then roll up the strips and put them in a resealable plastic bag. Use a separate bag for each type of seed. Add a tablespoon of powdered milk in a paper towel to the bag to keep seeds dry.

6. Label the bags or slide the corresponding seed packet into each bag so you can identify the tapes later. Store in a cool, dry place until planting time.

7. Plant by laying tapes in rows and covering with a fine soil to the recommended depth.

Nematodes

You have a pest problem but you don’t want to waste time with something ineffective or, worse, toxic. One chemical-free option for ridding your garden of loathsome insect pests is beneficial nematodes. These naturally occurring, microscopic, soil-dwelling roundworms cause disease in insects, infecting and killing them. They do not, however, infect plants, animals, earthworms or humans. Of the thousands of species of nematodes, only a small number are

useful to farmers and gardeners. Most are considered innocuous, harmlessly feeding off bacteria and fungi in the soil or dwelling at the bottom of the ocean. Beneficial nematodes, the type sold commercially, may also be referred to in research or on product labels as entomopathogenic nematodes (EPNs). You can't just buy any of these nematodes, however, and toss them down. You need to find the right ones and apply them correctly.

Nearly 10 of the more than 75 EPN species are sold as beneficial nematodes, but before purchasing them, it helps to understand differences in their behaviour. Not all EPN species, for instance, find insects in the same way, which affects the insect pests these nematodes can effectively be used against. For example, one commercialized species, *Steinernema carpocapsae*, searches for hosts on the soil surface by lifting 90 per cent of its body from the surface as it awaits a passing insect. The products that contain this species as an active ingredient are, therefore, most effective in controlling mobile, surface-dwelling insects, like cutworms. They would be unlikely to find sedentary, underground insects, like white grubs, because they would be looking in the wrong place. On the other hand, species like *heterorhabditis bacteriophora* search by crawling through the soil. If white grubs are the target, this would be a good species to apply. The labels of most products list the species of EPN and likely targeted insects, but you can save valuable shopping time by visiting the following website of the Ohio State University: www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/nematodes, which contains a full list of beneficial nematode sources and other consumer information.

To get the best results, you need to know that nematodes have six life stages, but it is during only one of these stages that a nematode can exist without a host. This means EPNs and the products that contain them have a limited life span. EPNs are also susceptible to temperature extremes, so be sure to follow product label instructions about storage and shelf life or you might apply dead nematodes to your garden. Beware of products that you find in retail outlets that are stored at room temperature; nematodes that are refrigerated have the longest shelf life.

Because little is known about what happens to EPN applications after they hit the ground, it is best to apply them when targeted

insects are present. Preventive treatments are risky because the nematodes may perish before the pests arrive. EPN products work best when applied to the soil. There are some other uses, such as applying them to the trunks of trees with boring insects, but applying them to foliage is generally a waster of time, energy and money. For the best results, only buy nematode products that specifically list the type of pest you are combating.

Knowing your pests and being mindful of the product you buy and how you apply it can greatly affect the outcome of your nematode pest-fighting experience. When done right, beneficial nematode applications can be a safe alternative for curbing your insect infestation.

Nematodes have Needs

Beneficial nematodes are living creatures susceptible to environmental conditions and require the right setting to survive. For the best results, follow four simple rules:

1. Make sure the area of application is moist when you apply the product.
2. The soil temperature should be at least 60 degrees F for most products to be effective.
3. To avoid exposing EPNs to ultraviolet light, apply them toward the end of the day and irrigate the area immediately after application to wash them into the soil.
4. Match the EPN species to the pest that you are trying to control.

Fine Gardening, October 2009

Good Buzz

Bees protect plants from caterpillars

It turns out that as bees flit from flower to flower, they serve as garden watchdogs as well as pollinators. Researchers from the University of Wurzburg, Germany, found that peppers confined in a tent with both bees and leaf-eating caterpillars had up to 70 percent less leaf damage than peppers in a tent with just caterpillars. Many caterpillars detect air vibrations with fine sensory hairs on their bodies, "but," the researchers explained, "they cannot distinguish between hating wasps and harmless bees." If they feel a buzz, they will stop munching or even drop to the ground. Among the many



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bee-friendly plants you can interplant with vegetables are sunflowers, cosmos, gorage, cilantro, zinnias and clovers. *Organic Gardening Aug/Oct 2009.*

Measuring Up

I am pitifully lacking when it comes to estimating distances in the garden. A tape measure isn't always handy, so I improvise. With a permanent marker, I wrote feet and inches markings on the long handles of my rakes and hoes. Then I sealed the finish with a spray varnish. So now I always have a measuring tool with me. *Sharon Williamson, Cold Lake Alberta.*

Stratifying Seeds

Many perennial seeds require chilling before planting to assure that germination will occur. Cold stratification is accomplished by placing the seeds in a damp medium and storing them in a cool – not freezing – place to chill for three to eight weeks. Placing the damp soil and seeds into a plastic bag and putting them in the refrigerator is one way to accomplish this task. The back of most seed packets will specify how long your seeds will need to stay in cold storage.

Watering Pots

Regular, thorough watering could possibly be the most important factor in a container planting's success. A container that isn't watered enough will limp along in survival mode. Water your containers whenever the soil feels dry to the touch and until water comes out of the pot's drainage holes. If this happens instantly, don't be fooled. This means that your pot is bone dry and needs an even longer soaking.

Mail Order Savvy

It's important to know the reputation of a mail-order plant seller that you plan to patronize. Are its plants in good health? Is its customer service up to par? Does it deliver on its promises? Luckily, there is an online resource where you can check on a nursery's standing and post ratings of your own. Visit the Garden Watchdog (<http://davesgarden.com/products/gwd>), a feature of Dave's Garden online gardening community where gardeners share their opinions on which companies really deliver on quality, price and service. The Internet is a wonderful thing.

Dry Wit

Two little old ladies were sitting on a park bench outside the local town hall where a flower show was in progress. The thin one leaned over and said, 'Life is so boring. We never have any fun anymore. For \$10 I'd take my clothes off and streak through that stupid flower show!'

'You're on!' said the other old lady, holding up a \$10 bill.

The first little old lady slowly fumbled her way out of her clothes and, completely naked, streaked (as fast as an old lady can) through the front door of the flower show.

Waiting outside, her friend soon heard a huge commotion inside the hall, followed by loud applause and shrill whistling.

Finally, the smiling and naked old lady came through the exit door surrounded by a cheering crowd.

'What happened?' asked her waiting friend.

'I won first prize as 'Best Dried Arrangement'.'