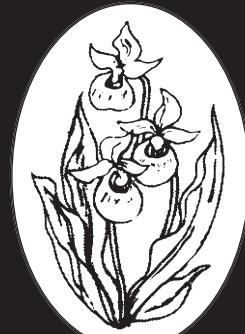


# January 2012 Newsletter



*He that sincerely  
loves nature,  
finds pleasure  
everywhere.*

*Vincent Van Gogh*



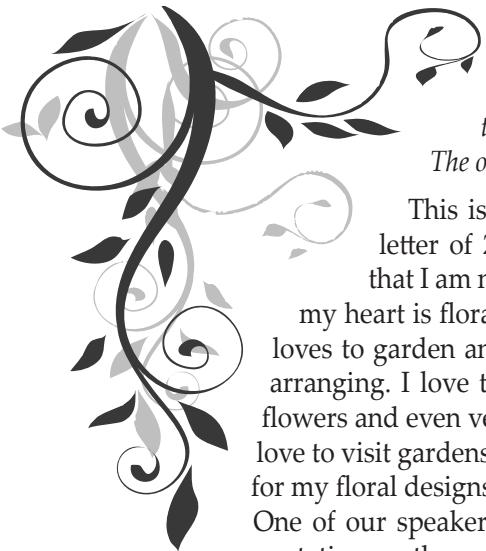
Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District  
Horticultural  
Society

P.O. Box 494  
Perth, ON, K7H 3G1  
[www.gardenontario.org](http://www.gardenontario.org)

District #2 of the  
Ontario Horticultural  
Association



## PRESIDENT'S PEN

"There are two seasonal diversions that can ease the bite of any winter. One is the January thaw. The other is the seed catalogues." - Hal Borland

This is my first President's Pen for the first newsletter of 2012. Those members who know me know that I am not much of a gardener. The subject closest to

my heart is floral design. I am fortunate to have David who loves to garden and grow flowers for me to use in my flower arranging. I love to be in gardens and walk around enjoying flowers and even vegetables at their various stages of growth. I love to visit gardens and attend flower shows to gain inspiration for my floral designs.

One of our speakers this year is Debbie Lytle who will give a presentation on the garden of **Les Quatre Vents** – Francis Cabot's private garden in the Charlevoix region of Quebec.

I do hope that you enjoy all the speakers that have been asked to speak this year. If you have a particular subject you would like to learn more about please don't hesitate to contact me.

*Madeline Archer*

## We Will Miss You...

Several of our PDHS Directors are stepping down this year. They are Barbara Smith, our very efficient and long-serving Treasurer. Job very well done Barbara. The PDHS is in great financial shape due to your efforts. Kathy Allen, who organized so many social events, led many decorative expeditions, rounded up volunteers and stepped into a million jobs that required doing (Junior Gardeners, Mum ordering, planting, transporting to name just a few). You also provided us with a sense of fun Kathy, and you will be sorely missed. Denise D'Aoust who worked for several years helping to plan our meeting socials ensuring we had lots of goodies to eat and Aline Conboy who valiantly streamlined our haphazard membership desk into a thing of efficiency and beauty!

Thank you to all of you.

## Christmas Social

If you didn't make it to the Christmas Social, potluck and AGM this year on

December 13, 2011 at the Perth Legion, you missed a good time and great food.

Many of the beautiful centrepieces taken home by lucky winners were made at a "centrepiece bee" held at Kathy Allen's house the day before. Lots of fun!

Many thanks to Kathy Allen who organized the whole social and potluck. Its success is directly attributable to her hard work.

At the AGM, Jeff Blackadar Director, District 2, announced his intention to stand for nomination as 2nd Vice-President of the OHA which would mean his current position of District 2 Director would be open in March 2012 if he is successful. He encouraged members to consider being nominated for this position.

We'll be doing it again in December 2012 so browse through your recipe books and see what new dish you can find. We always have a lot of wonderful desserts - but who ever said that was a bad thing?



**President:** Madeline Archer  
**Secretary:** Pam Pratt • **Newsletter:** Pam Pratt, Irene Hofmann

## 2012 List of Directors

You will find a list of your new board of directors for 2012 below. Please feel free to contact any one if you need information, wish to volunteer or have any suggestions to make the PDHS even better than it is. Please welcome our new directors - Margo Fulford, Janet Osbourne and Carolle Anne Armour.

**President:** Madeline Archer

**Vice President/Treasurer:** Margo Fulford

**Secretary/Communications/Publicity:** Pam Pratt

**Membership:** David Archer

**Community Gardens/Plant Sale:** Lynda Haddon

**Yearbook/Website Chair/Youth:** Linda Bartlett

**Liaison/IT/AV/Guest & School Liaison:** Ted Bryant

**Library:** Kevin Long

**Programs:** Madeline Archer

**Social:** Janet Osbourne

**Member-At-Large:** Carolle Anne Armour

**Newsletter:** Irene Hofmann / Pam Pratt

**Phone Tree:** Margo Fulford/ Carolle Anne Armour

## Yearbook 2012

Linda Bartlett has, once again, done an outstanding job on our new 2012 Yearbook. It is chock full of useful information, helpful hints, our meeting schedule, monthly speakers and our flower show schedules. On the back cover you will find the advertising of our eight new corporate sponsors who committed funds to the PDHS. They are Hillside Gardens, Rock Wall Gardens, Sylvia's Plant Place, Ferry Garden, PharmaPlus, Johnson Chiropractic, Impressions Printing and McLeans Insurance. Many thanks to all of them. Also look closely at the artwork for the cover. It is a design done by Rowan McCulloch, a Grade 10 student at PDCI. It represents our pride in our mentoring program for area youth and the adoption of the Showy Lady Slipper Orchid as our emblem. Good work Rowan!

## Who me volunteer??

Here's good news! Volunteering is fun - especially at the PDHS. We have many small, one hour/one time jobs that don't commit you to anything for the long term. In doing one of them you will meet new people and have a few laughs. Many jobs don't require any physical work and you will be the beneficiary. Volunteers make everything better! Contact any board member to put your name on a contact list, fill out the volunteer form on the website or at the membership desk at any meeting. We look forward to meeting you and knowing you better.

## Junior Gardeners

At this time of year I start thinking "Junior Gardeners." I have a request to members who have healthy indoor plants. Could you please take cuttings and start rooting them for our "Plant Library"? We would prefer small plants, as the children have to transport them to and from school in a gift bag. If you don't have soil &/or pots to put them in, then you can bring the cuttings to our February and March meetings and I can pot them up for you.

We are still collecting Canadian Tire money, so if you don't use the money yourself, please bring it to our meetings. Thank you.

We are always looking for volunteers to help with our Junior Gardeners program, so if you like working with children, have an hour or so on a Thursday, a.m. or p.m., then please contact me, Janet Cain, or any other executive member of the society.

You don't even have to be an expert on gardening as the program is laid out in an easy book and volunteers are there to help the children follow the instructions. Please consider helping with this worthwhile and rewarding program.

*Janet Cain*

*Co-ordinator for Junior Gardeners Program*

## Protect your plants from wicked winter weather

When you think of a Canadian winter, you think of the frosty temperatures and snow. But oddly enough, cold and, in many cases, even snow, aren't your garden's worst winter enemies; it's the wind and those sunny winter days we love that could kill our plants.

### Wind hazards

"Wind can be the real villain, especially with roses," says Tim Schwenker, head gardener of Hendrie Park's ornamental plantings at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton, Ontario. "People wonder, 'Winter wasn't that bad, but my rose canes all died to the ground.'"

Cold winter winds, explains Schwenker, dry out the branches of roses and other exposed shrubs. Gardeners are often prepared to deal with the cold, but forget the blasts that slam into their gardens from the north and west.

Wind can even damage the roots of top-heavy plants like hybrid tea roses and newly planted trees and shrubs. When it comes to these new plants, there's one stem and many branches but no major root system, especially if they weren't planted right in the first place, says Schwenker. It's tough for a plant to make a comeback from that kind of winter beating.

### **Sun: nice for us, not for our plants**

A newly planted garden in direct winter sun can be at real risk. "The worst thing for plants, particularly perennials, is alternate freezing and thawing," says Schwenker. Plants will sustain root damage from heaving and also from the standing water left behind after the snow melts.

Some trees, too, suffer from the winter sun's rays. Apples, flowering crabapples, black cherries, some maples and ornamental cherries—especially grafted ones like the 'Kwanzan' Japanese cherry—are the most vulnerable: One side of the tree heats up, and the frozen wood expands, then splits. To a sensitive gardener, unsightly frost cracks running down the trunk are heartbreaking. The wound will heal itself eventually, Schwenker says, but repeated over the years, the weakened tree could fall over.

#### **Snow problem?**

Snow, by itself, is actually a good thing, says Schwenker. It keeps the ground cold, protecting the roots of plants from disturbance during their winter's sleep. When it does melt in spring, snow tends to melt slowly. The ground is also thawing, so the earth can gradually absorb the water.

Of course, soil with good drainage is the key to making this natural cycle work. If you're cursed with heavy, clay soil, the snow melt could turn into an ice pack or standing water. "Amend the soil," Schwenker recommends. "Compost, compost, compost, and work it in at least 12 inches [20 cm]."

Snow load is another thing to watch for: "Don't pile snow on top of your nice boxwood hedge," he warns. Aim for the base of evergreens and twiggy shrubs; dumping it on top is likely to bend—and eventually break—branches.

Beware of snow load after a heavy snowfall, too. "It's good to shake off your more vulnerable plant material," Schwenker says. "You can get out there with a broom or rake to do it."

#### **Easy solutions to winter woes**

Follow these easy tips to avoid losing plants to wind, sun and snow damage:

- \* Wrap plants loosely in a weatherproof fabric like burlap to protect them from drying winds and to keep floppy specimens from bending under the weight of the snow. Tree wraps made of burlap or special cardboard sleeves that go around the trunks help prevent frost cracks. You can also use sheets of white polyfoam, but avoid black plastic, Schwenker emphasizes; black absorbs heat and your plant will cook.

- \* Shade the ground, especially your roses and exposed flowering shrubs, with evergreen branches. Discarded Christmas trees are great for this, either

whole or cut apart. The branches hold their needles through the winter, providing protection from sun and wind and helping hold snow in place. They'll even keep the ground from thawing during short, sudden warm spells.

\* Mulch everywhere you can. Remember all those leaves last fall? This is their purpose in life. Just like snow, shredded or rotted leaves, or broken-up bales of straw, act as an insulator and keep the ground nice and cold. As time passes, the mulch will hold in soil moisture, prevent weeds and ultimately break down into lovely loam—an added bonus.

All these winter solutions work together, Schwenker points out. With them—and a little luck—you can look forward to a green and happy spring.

*Canadian Gardening online*

## **Killing With Kindness**

Here's my confession: I've killed plants. It happens to the best of us, regardless of our expertise. It could be because we left a potted plant unattended while on vacation or because we chose plants by their appearance rather than what's suited to our garden's conditions, but some plants are victims of something else entirely: too much kindness. For some reason, we always think plants need more attention, more water, more fertilizer, but this isn't always the case—in fact, most times, plants require not more but less attention.

#### **Don't Oversoak**

Overwatering is the number one killer of indoor plants. Think of it like this: Do you want to sit in a bath for 24 hours? Well, neither do your plants. Just like our skin gets wrinkled after an hour in the tub, a plant's roots will rot if soaked for too long. We often forget that, from October to March, daylight is decreasing and even indoor plants begin to slow in growth, in effect reducing their need for water and fertilizer. Similarly, outdoor irrigation systems left on too long create soggy sections of the yard and drown established perennials and shrubs, while even possibly causing needles on evergreens to brown. Plants enjoy drying slightly in between waterings, and they'll let you know with their happy, healthy, white roots.

#### **Avoid Overfeeding**

Consuming too much of any one thing is never healthy. Overfeeding stimulates rapid growth that causes plants to become soft, weak and susceptible to disease and insects. The healthiest plants are those that grow gradually, so the key is finding the balance between too much and too little fertilizer. Like watering, fertilizing indoor plants should be

drastically cut back – if not eliminated – from October to March as shorter daylight hours have plants resting. The less you grow the less you need. Just remember: fertilizer is unnecessary in gardens with rich organic matter, whereas fertilizer is key for potted plants and containers, as most are planted in soilless mixes that usually lack nutrients.

#### **Practice Tough Love**

Sometimes plants require tough love to kick their performance into high gear. For plant lacking in vigour or bloom, a hearty pruning of up to one-third of their overall growth should stimulate success (but remember to prune only after bloom or check directions for proper pruning times). In late summer, you should always pinch back annual containers (such as wave petunias and million bells) by up to half to promote new growth that will have your pots performing until frost. And bulbs, too, need to be left alone in summer to trigger their bloom cycle.

*Frankie Flowers, Canadian Gardening*

## **10 Principles To Grow By**

### **1. Allow a little imperfection**

Growing organically (simply put, without man-made chemicals) is priority No. 1 for environmentally conscious gardeners. Yet forgoing synthetic pesticides and fertilizers often means living with a few blemishes, such as bug-eaten leaves or a less-than-pristine lawn. It's best to be a little Zen about these foibles. Think of ceding control as part of what draws us to gardening in the first place.

### **2. Recycle and repurpose.**

Many gardeners are giving their yards structure with materials that would otherwise end up in a landfill. It takes a creative eye to see aesthetic possibilities in construction debris and a strong sense of design to transform it into something beautiful. Broken-up concrete can make a new wall, and pieces of wood or metal can be painted and used as a fence.

### **3. Shrink your lawn.**

If you want a patch of grass – for the kids or just because you like the look of it – then reduce it to a small area that requires less water and fewer resources. Too often we use sod as a default, as if we were colouring in the empty spaces between our flowerbeds with a green magic marker.

### **4. Select plants that thrive where you live.**

To be sustainable, a garden doesn't have to be reduced to a few native plants marooned in bare plots of stone or sand. If you like to grow flowers, do so! But it's best to make peace with your climate and investigate which species will flourish there, whether they are indigenous or not.

### **5. Keep your water.**

Any garden, no matter how small, is part of a bigger ecosystem. Porous materials, such as gravel or open stonework, keep precious rainwater on site by letting it seep into the earth unlike asphalt or concrete, which waste it down gutters and storm drains.

### **6. Build local.**

Just as foodies have discovered the pleasure and promise of local ingredients, gardeners are learning that regional pavers and gravel – rather than exotic stones that have been shipped from afar – are often more suitable because they match the colour and texture of the surrounding geology.

### **7. Pick a purpose.**

New gardeners usually launch into the fun part of gardening (planting flowers) before giving much thought to the overall layout of their yard. It's better to start by thinking about how you plan to use the whole space. Will you be eating outdoors? Is privacy a priority? Do you have kids or pets? Make sure to match your lifestyle with your garden's design so that valuable outdoor space will not be wasted.

### **8. Grow to eat.**

Growing, cooking and eating what you've planted – no matter how tiny the yield – is one of the most important day-to-day human art forms. This nearly lost tradition binds us to nature in an immediate way that ought to be passed on to future generations.

### **9. Share a space.**

In a practice called yard sharing, a group of neighbours turn their front lawns over to growing a different type of vegetable or fruit. The harvest (all that zucchini!) is divided up among the participants.

### **10. Create a place of beauty.**

Pleasure is essential to any garden. Whether you have a flower plot in a rainy area of a garden in the desert, seek beauty in what your climate offers and plant accordingly. Your gardening life will be much easier.

*Stephen Orr, Martha Stewart Living, March 2011*