

January 2014 Newsletter



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District Horticultural Society

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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association

Strip away the gadgets and the techniques, the books and the magazines and the soil test kits, and what you're left with, at the end of the day, is this: a stretch of freshly turned dirt, a handful of seeds scratched into the surface, and a marker to remember where they went. It is at the same time an incredibly brave and an incredibly simple thing to do, entrusting your seeds to the earth and waiting for them to rise up out of the ground to meet you."

Amy Stewart, *From the Ground Up: The Story of a First Garden*



Junior Gardeners

Now 2014 is upon us, it is time for me to start thinking about the Junior Gardeners' program again. I would like to ask members to start taking cuttings of any (small) indoor plants and root them for the children's "plant library." Once they have roots, if you don't have pots or soil, then you may bring them to the February and March meetings and I can pot them for you. If you aren't attending the meetings then please contact me and I can make arrangements to pick them up. My phone number is 613-264-1065.

Also, I do not need any containers, (i.e. strawberry containers, tuna cans, Styrofoam trays, etc.). I had such a huge response last year that I have enough for this year. Thank you. Canadian Tire money is always welcome.

I will be contacting the schools

soon to find out how many students will be involved this year, and then contacting volunteers who helped out last year. If you see me at the movie night then please come and talk to me.

Janet Cain
Coordinator, Junior Gardeners

Will You Volunteer Your Garden?

We are hoping to continue our tours of PDHS members' gardens for the summer months of 2014. Are you willing to have other PDHS members come one day in the summer to see yours? If you are, please see Madeline Archer at the break. We hope 4 or 5 members volunteer for one of the following dates: July 8, 15, 29 and August 12 and 26.

President: Madeline Archer

Secretary: Peggy Clark • **Newsletter:** Pam Pratt, Irene Hofmann

It is always amazing to see the variety and types of gardens our members have. From small town-living gardens, to large vegetable or herb gardens to glorious flowers gardens. All are of interest, so don't be shy.

Growing Beautiful Orchids

Orchids hold a mysterious attraction to us all. They are one of the most tropical flowers and having one growing in your home brings back memories of your last tropical vacation. Now, they are readily available at grocery stores and you wonder—should I or shouldn't I? Following these few tips, the answer is definitely YES!

More windowsill orchids die from drowning than any other cause. Just because many of them grow in humid conditions doesn't mean they like to be wet all the time. Indeed the orchids we most commonly grow in our homes like their potting mix to dry out on the surface before you water them again. Not overwatering does not mean that you should let your orchid dry out completely. Check to see that the surface of the potting medium is dry to the touch before watering. If you probe just below the surface, you should feel some slight dampness. If you can't trust your "finger meter", then water once a week or every other week, depending on the humidity in your home. Orchids in the kitchen can probably do with every other week. People so love their plants that they often go overboard to give them the best, including softened water. Don't! The salts in this treated water can be very harmful to any plant, but especially to orchids.

We tend to grow mainly *Phalaenopsis* and *Dendrobiums*, but also on the popular list are *Cymbidium*, *Oncidium*, *Odontoglossum* and *Cattleyas*. They all like temperatures in the 10 to 21 C degree range and medium to bright light, and are long blooming. Both *Phalaenopsis* and *Cymbidiums* can be encouraged to bloom by a drop in temperature to below 10 C for a few weeks. *Phalaenopsis* and *Oncidium* don't mind temperatures up to 24 C.

Orchids are highly sensitive to fertilizer. They are light feeders adapted to getting their mineral nutrients from the atmosphere (some orchids are epiphytic, meaning they obtain their nourishment from the air, although they may

attach themselves to another plant for stability). Growing in controlled circumstances inside your home limits the amount of nitrogen and water and hence the nutrients they derive from the water available to them. Nitrogen is further depleted by the decaying of the bark in their planting medium. Therefore you should use a balanced 20-20-20 fertilizer at a weak strength - 10 per cent if feeding every time you water, 25 per cent of what is normally recommended for houseplants if feeding monthly. A seaweed solution can be used occasionally to provide trace elements. It is better to underfeed than to overfeed.

Happy orchids have happy roots and *Phalaenopsis* are famous for sending out thick air roots, which in the wild are searching for minerals and water from the air around them. Healthy roots will be whitish-green, becoming greener when misted or watered. Let them grow and give them a misty drink from time to time or take the plant to the sink and let the water run through, a good idea for any of the six mentioned above.

What's that bulbish thing coming out of my *Dendrobiums*? It's a pseudobulb. All of the above orchids, with the exception of *Phalaenopsis*, produce pseudobulbs. It's a storage organ, like a rhizome, containing mostly water and it emerges from the stem between two leaf nodes. Leaves and stems may appear along the length of the pseudobulb and in some cases the flowers emerge from its top. These plants are called sympodial. *Phalaenopsis* do not have rhizomes or pseudobulbs. Instead, they belong to the minority group in the orchid family, being monopodial, which simply means they have a central stem from which grow the leaves, the roots and the flowers. The leaves are fleshy and thick because that is where they store their water, just like some succulents. If you have shriveled leaves, it's a sure sign that you need to increase watering - being sure to let the water run though the plant and thoroughly drain. Under natural conditions, *Phalaenopsis* grow what is to us upside down to allow their roots the best exposure to water and nutrients.

There are thousands of different orchids and they all have their own quirks and growing conditions (think of lady slippers, for example), so the rules vary even within these six varieties. If someone gives you an orchid, pay close attention

to its full Latin name and do your research for specific care.

If you would like to learn more about growing orchids, join us at Algonquin College in February for a Seminar about growing orchids and other houseplants. Visit our www.lanarkmastergarde.nrs.mgoi.ca for more information.

Monthly Financial Statement

DECEMBER 31, 2013

Ledger Balance – December 1, 2013 **\$3,239.70**

RECEIPTS –

Grants	\$ 50.00	
Year Book	150.00	
Bank Interest	<u>.03</u>	
		\$ 200.03

EXPENSES –

Community Projects	\$ 43.00	
Meeting Expenses	65.82	
Speakers	75.00	
Social	<u>175.00</u>	
		\$ 358.82

Ledger Balance
– December 31, 2013 **\$3,080.91**

Reserve Fund – GIC DUE JULY 18, 2014
for 3 years - \$2,500.00 + Interest

Why Houseplants Drop Leaves

*Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor
University of Vermont*

Houseplants drop leaves for many reasons, but most are related to improper care or poor growing conditions. Often just giving plants the correct light and temperature, or controlling pests, is all that is needed to prevent future leaf drop.

Either too much or too little watering may cause leaf drop. A common problem is that when you see leaves droop or even fall off, you may be tempted to think the plant is thirsty and needs more water. This could lead to overwatering and even more leaves dropping. Make sure when watering, especially in northern climates

in winter, to use lukewarm water. Icy cold water can chill the soil and injure roots of tropical plants, leading to root rots, leaves dropping, and perhaps even dead plants.

Extremely low humidity will cause sensitive plants, such as gardenia, to drop leaves although most common houseplants will not show leaf drop in response to low humidity only.

Fertility, or rather lack of sufficient nutrients, can lead to leaf drop. With this, usually you will notice leaves lighter in color first, so you have a chance to correct this before leaves totally turn yellow and drop. Use a houseplant fertilizer, according to label directions, particularly while plants are growing or flowering.

Plants in pots that are too small may drop leaves. Why? Because there may not be enough root room to support all the leaves the plant tries to form, so the oldest leaves drop off. Because the space for the roots is inadequate, the plant may not be able to absorb enough water and nutrients.

Some leaf drop occurs when plants are subjected to a big change in environment. Such changes occur when plants grown outside for the summer are brought inside for the winter. Greenhouse-grown plants may drop leaves if placed in dimly-lit house conditions, when they've been grown in high light. Some plants just may require higher light to grow and keep all their leaves. Leaf drop brought on by a change in environment should be temporary and non-life threatening (to the plants), new leaves forming that are adapted to the new site.

Chilling is one cause of leaf drop related to environment. Tropical plants are sensitive to low, but above freezing, temperatures. Plants on windowsills may be exposed to chilling temperatures. Hot or cold drafts may be a problem for some plants. The poinsettia is a prime example of a plant that drops leaves due to exposure to cold drafts of air.

Insects and diseases can cause leaf drop, but are not as common as the previously listed causes. Recently I had a variegated English ivy that was losing leaves. On closer inspection I found leaves infested with spider mites. Washing plants well with mildly soapy water is a good start, and often all that is needed, for pest control.

Some leaf drop on houseplants is normal. Older plants should be expected to drop a leaf

or two occasionally. This is particularly the case with plants that grow upright like umbrella plant or cane plant, losing lower leaves as newer ones form on the top. The only solutions for this are to stake plants and live with this habit, to propagate new plants by air layering the canes, or to give away the plant and get a new, more

compact one.

If you're not sure of the correct culture and conditions for your houseplants, check any directions that came with them, look online or in books, or ask your local full-service garden centre.

PERTH AND DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Your PDHS needs your help! Not only do you help yourself by helping us to create a vibrant and interesting horticultural society but our programs and projects are a great way to meet new people, have fun and broaden your own horizons. You never know when an accidental meeting with someone can change your life.

Why not get involved today?

Bring us your ideas, offer us your knowledge and skills (we all have some) and help beautify and educate your community. You can volunteer one hour, one day, one week, the whole year through – the opportunities cover all possibilities.

Please fill out the information below and give to any PDHS Board Member.
Better yet fill out the form on-line and send it to

volunteer@perthhortsociety.com

Feel free to ask about the time commitment for anything that interests you.

Your input is vital to making our Society a success!

Name: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail (if available) _____

Please note: Your personal information is for PDHS business only and will not be shared with any outside agency or business.

Indicate your interests below or suggest any others you may like:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Junior Gardeners | <input type="checkbox"/> Baking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with Christmas Social | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant Sale and Exchange | <input type="checkbox"/> Trim Christmas Tree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant Floating Gardens | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant, maintain, clean-up of Community Gardens | | |

Suggest an area you are interested in that isn't listed:

Volunteer by time commitment only: Amount of time available _____

Thank you all.