



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District Horticultural Society

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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association

November 2011 Newsletter

You can bury
a lot of troubles
digging in
the dirt.

- Author Unknown

President's Pen

This still very warm weather has given me a few more chances to get into the gardening for some, what I call, 'serious weeding.' It is actually a favourite time of mine to weed, i.e. no bugs, the ground is warm and damp making weeding a cinch, the majority of plants are cut down to a height to capture snow for insulating thus making it easier to find the undesirables such as grass, clover and dandelions that tuck themselves up beside the desirables. And the sun isn't too hot making an excursion into the garden altogether quite pleasant. It feels as if I am getting away with something special. We will have the next several months to think about what worked, what didn't and what we might like to try for next year. Please, bring on the garden catalogues!

This will be my last President's Pen as my term is up. Thank you so much for making these past two years such a pleasure and for all I have learned not only from our many great speakers but from you, yourselves. The PDHS is a vibrant, exciting and important organization in our community and it has been a honour to be an integral part of helping to make it grow.

See you in the garden,
Lynda



Sparkle at the Christmas Social

Not in the Christmas mood? Put on your best sparkling outfit, bring your spouse or a guest and come to the PDHS Christmas Social on Tuesday, December 13, 2011 at the Perth Legion and get yourself into the proper frame of mind.

Once again, it will be a potluck supper so cook up your famous Christmas recipe or dessert and bring it to the Legion. We always have a wonderful array of delicious dishes to share. PDHS will supply cooked turkey.

The festivities will begin at 6 p.m. with appetizers. Cocktails, wine and beer can be purchased at the bar.

The Annual General Meeting will take place after dinner and the Board of Directors for 2012 will be voted in.

While at the Social why not avoid the January rush and renew your PDHS membership? The renewal forms will be available to fill out at a special membership table. Membership is still held at \$10 per year - the cheapest bargain in town!

If you would like to help in the preparations and set-up or wish to "voluntell" your spouse, contact any board member at the Nov. 8, 2011 meeting or show up at the Legion a little early.

Kick start your Christmas and join us on the 13th! See you there..

Christmas Table Centrepieces

Do you enjoy having one of the winning tickets for the table centrepieces at the Christmas Social? In the past, the board members of the PDHS have made these floral arrangements but this year we are inviting everyone to participate. Find a small container that you no longer use or better yet, buy it at the dollar store and start designing. Collect greenery, small decorations, flowers whatever you feel like and make an arrangement for others to enjoy at Christmas. Let's see how many interesting and beautiful designs our members can create. The more



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Newsletter: Pam Pratt, Irene Hofmann

centrepieces, the more fun! No experience is required, just give it your best shot.

Perth Festival Of Good Cheer

November 26, 2011

Speaking of Christmas, the Town of Perth, is gearing up for the annual "Festival of Good Cheer" on November 26, 2011 at 6 p.m. at the Crystal Palace in the Tay Basin. This is when all the Christmas trees decorated by businesses and clubs in Perth are lit up for public viewing. Decorating the PDHS tree is a fun event and only requires an hour or two of your time. If you would like to join the fun contact Kathy Allen at 613-264-2827. A number of people are gathering to create the decorations on November 15 with the actual tree decorating taking place just before the 26th. Everyone is welcome!

Renew Your Membership Now!

Avoid the January rush at Movie Night, and renew your membership now. Aileen Conboy has worked hard to streamline the process so look for her renewal forms at tonight's break. You can also renew your membership at the upcoming Christmas Social as well. If you have an e-mail address and haven't given it to her, please try to do so.

New members are always welcome at the PDHS and they can join at any time from now on for 2012. If they join now, they are more than welcome at the Christmas Social.

Membership in the PDHS is a great bargain - speakers, friends, goodies, 10% off at local nurseries, a lovely Yearbook and lots of fun.

We hope to see you all back in 2012.

Did You Know?.... NOAH'S ARK WAS BUILT BY VOLUNTEERS BUT THE TITANIC BY PROFESSIONALS

What do you get if you volunteer at the PDHS? New friends, a sense of accomplishment and participation in a Canada-wide organization. Did we mention new friends? Why not give it a try? The time commitment is very little, the rewards are greater. Contact any board member if you can spare any time to help out in 2012 or can serve as a board member.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE : ISN'T
JUST FOR CELEBRITY CONVICTS**

Upcoming

Ottawa Rock Garden and Horticultural Society is hosting a presentation by Paul Zammit (www.paulzammit.ca). His topic is *Gardening for All Seasons: Growing Plants in the Ground and in Containers*. Meeting starts at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, November 12 at Westboro Masonic Hall 430 Churchill Avenue Ottawa. Nonmembers can attend for \$5. This one isn't a Master Gardener thing but Paul Zammit is a pretty big name.

An Invitation...

Horticultural Society members are invited to participate in the Kings Creek Nurseries workshop series, located near Franktown. Here, participants learn how to make their own Christmas wreath or, if preferred, planters and table centrepieces. Workshops are held every morning and afternoon of every weekend from November 12 until December 18 inclusive. Alternatively, private workshops for small groups can be booked at other times. More details can be found at www.kingscreektrees.com, or by phoning 613-253-4126. The cost of the workshops is \$50 and this includes HST. You will take home a beautiful, multi-species wreath that florists often sell for \$80. Free home-baked goods and hot drinks, and a great atmosphere, along with our popular Christmas store.

January 2012 Movie Night

Deep in the midst of the January freeze, in the aftermath of Christmas we plan to dazzle you with colour. Once again, our first meeting of the new year, will be our famous "movie night". Several shorter movies are planned for this meeting. The first movie will be "Keukenhof Holland". You will see fantastic footage of millions of flowering bulbs in fabulous landscape architecture - not to be missed! The second feature will be ... well, we'll keep you in suspense. You'll have to come to find out. Volunteers are always needed to pop and bag some popcorn - after all, you can't have a movie without popcorn! Contact any board member if you can help out. Watch our website www.perthortsociety.com for more information.

Join us January 10, 2012 in the PDCI Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. for "Keukenhof Holland" and the "mystery" movie.

Love Cookies?

We all love cookies, squares and cake with a glass of juice or coffee at our social breaks during our

meetings. We need bakers (once a year will do it) and one or two people to set up the table, and bring the juice before each meeting. It really is not much of a commitment. Some volunteers have decorated the table, some have not. The choice is yours. If you are leery about volunteering and getting into too much work, why not try this? Everyone will love you for it! Contact Kathy Allen or any other board member if you are willing to try.

How To Decorate Your Christmas Tree Like A Pro

Gussying up a Christmas tree seems like a pretty straightforward affair: stand it up straight, throw some lights around it, and hang the ornaments. Add in these clever tips for a professional tree dressing.

Here are some hints on how to decorate your Christmas tree from MarthaStewart.com and christmas.lovetoknow.com.

1. Place your Christmas lights near the middle of the branch so the cord is out of sight. Start at the bottom of your tree and work your way up.

2. Most experts recommend using two strands of garland for every vertical foot of tree. Beaded garlands

look best draped from branch to branch, while ribbon or foil garland is most attractive when draped loosely around the entire tree. Start hanging garland at the top of your tree, gradually increasing the amount of garland used as you work your way down.

3. Organize your ornaments. Decide on a theme or a colour palette and lay your ornaments out before you get started. For example: choose simple ornaments of one colour as a backdrop for the more ornate or handmade sentimental ornaments.

4. Hanging the Ornaments. Hang the simple or unicoloured ornaments first then intersperse with the accents and complimentary hues.

5. Evaluate. Constantly step back from the tree and evaluate what you have done. Fill in the gaps. Hang your ornaments on the outside and the inside of your tree and don't neglect the back..

6. Keep your fragile ornaments safe by hanging them near the top where they won't get knocked off by your pets or small children.

7. Emphasize the vertical shape of the tree by hanging some long dangling ornaments and some icicles.

8. If all of this is too much, just have a party with family or friends and let them do it while you sip your wine and give advice!



Ask A Master Gardener

Dear Master Gardeners:

Last Spring I bought a Rain Barrel at the Great Lanark Rain Barrel Sale. It helped keep my plants well watered all summer and I love it. I think I should be doing something to protect it for the winter. Can you help?

Over the Barrel in Tay Valley

Dear Over the Barrel:

You are absolutely correct! I am sure that all summer long, you cleared any debris from the filter basket on top. Before winter the rain barrel must be disconnected from your downspout, emptied and the tap at the bottom left in the open position. Rinse the rain barrel with a garden hose. Storage indoors is recommended but if left outside it must not contain any fluids. Frozen fluids expand and can damage the

rain barrel. If you are leaving your barrel outside, turn it upside down and tie a plastic baggie around the tap so that water does not accumulate in the tap. Replace any downspout that you removed in the spring so water from your eavestrough will drain away from your foundation. When emptying your barrel, let the water run over the roots of trees, shrubs (especially evergreens) or roses to give your plants a good drink before winter.

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

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Four Reasons To Avoid A Fall Cleanup

By Signe Langford, *Canadian Gardening online*
Running out of time to tidy your yard? Left to its own devices, your garden will know what to do

In days gone by, late autumn meant the raking and burning of fallen leaves. That's right, burning. There was a time, when setting a mound of leaves and garden debris on fire was allowed, and in some smaller towns, even today, the smell of burning leaves—quite distinct from the smell of a barbecue or even a fireplace—infuses the cool autumn air.

But is this compunction for cleaning up leaves, dead plant stalks and flower heads a product of some misguided notion of man's dominion over nature? If we look to nature's gardens—forests and grasslands—as an example of good gardening practices, you won't see anyone out there with a rake and garden waste bag. The closest thing to a fall cleanup is a wildfire caused by a lightning strike, a hungry herd of ruminants, or the slow, inevitable process of plants becoming humus.

Perhaps there is wisdom in nature. But some gardening experts will insist that a fall cleanup is absolutely necessary for the prevention of disease and maintaining order. Arlene Hazzan-Green and Marc Green, owners of The Backyard Urban Farm Company, are two seasoned gardeners who say there are pros and cons to leaving a garden to its own devices. For example, they agree that it's lovely to feed the birds, but leaving dead and decomposing plant matter on the ground could offer shelter for unwanted pests. So, if you aren't inclined to completely tidy your yard before winter, conduct a selective cleanup; one that won't invite pests and diseases. For example, pull out annuals and cut back perennials that show signs of pest infestation. And, of course, come spring, introduce helpful insects such as ladybugs and praying mantises to take care of some of the bad guys.

Here are some reasons why you might want to retire your rake and pruners for the season.

- Your garden can generate a ready-made winter mulch. Autumn leaves are more than pretty. Fallen leaves lie on the ground, forming a protective, moisture-retaining layer for the grass, clover or whatever groundcover lies beneath. As the sun warms and melts the snow, water flows through any debris left on the ground, pulling nourishment from the decomposing matter, down to the roots, feeding the soil. Dead leaves require fungus to break down, warn the Greens, whereas other organic matter will be consumed by bacteria.

The problem? These same funguses may find their way to your beloved ornamentals. Furthermore, leaving dead and decomposing plant matter on the ground is providing insect pests with a cosy place to bed down for the winter. Eggs, pupae and even adult insects can burrow down under all that brown stuff and find safe haven, only to emerge in the spring very hungry and in the mood for love.

If you're not in the mood to rake, small leaves left on the ground will allow air and water to pass through, but big leaves need to be shredded—try running a mower over them a few times to create a nice leafy mulch.

- Your garden can provide food for birds and animals. Spiky dead flower heads provide seeds for wintering birds—goldfinches especially love thistle and echinacea—and wizened wild grapes give pretty, rosy house finches a much-needed blast of sugar. Squirrels will make a winter snack of dried morning glory seeds—getting wildly drunk in the process—and if there's even one serviceberry left on the tree, you just know a robin who has stayed north too long, will enjoy the berry's energy and vitamin C.

- Your garden can create winter photo opps. There may be nothing growing in the garden, but it's still full of life, and there are ways to enjoy your winter garden. On a cold, gray day, there's nothing more rewarding than watching a delicate songbird perched on a prickly echinacea head, teetering in the wind, picking out the fatty seeds. "Winter plants, all brown and twisted and locked in time have a beauty of their own," says Marc Green, a semi-pro photographer. And after a perfect snowfall, spent flower stalks and tall grasses add graphic interest to an otherwise barren landscape.

- Your garden can re-seed itself naturally. Hardy plants, especially indigenous ones, are terrific self-seeders, and in the natural garden, plants are encouraged to self-sow. Leaving the cleanup of unwanted plant material allows seeds to go through the cold phase they require. Sure, there is the risk of prolific sowers sprouting up in unwanted areas and in greater numbers than desired, but that's easily remedied with a little weeding and hoeing in the spring.

By now you might be asking, "Won't leaving everything on the ground encourage weeds?" Sure, to some extent, but weeds are a fact of life, and even pavement can't stop a truly determined plant. Weed sprouts can be dealt with in the spring. Long before the invention of the rake, seasons came and went, plants grew and died, and leaves and wood fell to the ground. Think of it as the natural way to garden. Or, as Arlene calls it, "The lazy man's way!"