

October 2013 Newsletter



Gardening is about cheating,
about persuading unlikely plants
to survive in unlikely places
and when that trick is
well accomplished,
the results can be
highly satisfying.

David Wheeler



November Meeting And Speaker

Our very popular meeting with Cindy Zorgel is back again. Cindy will show us how to make "Simple Christmas Designs." Once again, these beautiful designs, simple to her but gorgeous to us, will be auctioned off to lucky members. This is your chance to buy a beautiful table centerpiece for a great price (if you bid enough!).

So, join us in the Auditorium of the PDCI on Tuesday, November 12, 2013, and learn how to make a professional Christmas floral design for the holidays.

No Giller Prize Please!!

Have you harbored a secret wish to be a writer? We have the position for you. We need a new contributor to assist Irene Hofmann who puts together our monthly newsletter. You would report any Board news, cover PDHS happenings and keep members informed of what is happening in our Society and in our local area. It is a once-a-month activity that takes a couple of

hours.

Not too confident? Here is some advice from a few people in the know:

"Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very'; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be."

- Mark Twain.

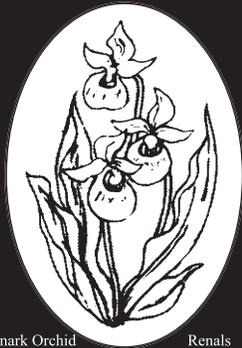
"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it."

- Winston Churchill

What's At The Back Of The Room?

Have you ever wondered who did those beautiful, prize winning flower arrangements you see at the back of the room every meeting? Well, its PDHS members participating in our monthly in-house flower shows. This means you!

Here is a wonderful opportunity for those members who have an interest in learning more about flower arranging. Madeline Archer is organizing three introductory flower design workshops. They will take place at PDCI, Room 101, at 7 pm on Monday, October 21-



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District
Horticultural
Society

P.O. Box 494
Perth, ON, K7H 3G1
www.gardenontario.org

District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association



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

2013; Monday, October 28, 2013; and Monday, November 4, 2013. At each workshop you will make one design and have a different design demonstrated.

The demonstrator will be Helen Halpenny. Helen is very well known in the community. She is an OHA judge, an RBG Judge, has won many ribbons in District II, and provincially.

The cost will be \$30 for the three workshops to cover the instructor's fees, room rental and material required. We need a minimum of 6 participants with a maximum of 10 participants.

For more information and enrolment in these workshops, please contact Madeline Archer at 613-283-1032 or by E-mail lookformadeline@gmail.com

This a wonderful opportunity for anyone who is a complete novice and those wishing to learn more.

Please come and get hooked!!!!

Help Us Keep Improving

If you enjoy the PDHS meetings, speakers and activities and would like to meet a lot more people or be involved so that the winter won't drag on the way it seems to - why not consider sitting on the PDHS Board of Directors?

While it is a fancy name, we are just regular members helping to ensure the PDHS always has lots to offer and help find ways to improve.

We need some new blood on our board so consider contributing to your Society. We have need of a new Secretary, Members-at-Large and a few others.

Contact Madeline Archer at 613-283-1032 or at lookformadeline@gmail.com to find out what is available.

No job is too big or complex to be a heavy burden so why not give it a try?

81 Days, 13 Hours And 20 Minutes

YES!! At the time of this writing these are the number of shopping days 'til Christmas.

It is a busy time with lots of activities and we hope you will save some time for us.

Our Annual General Meeting and Christmas Pot Luck Dinner will be coming up on December 10. Start planning those delicious desserts and favourite main courses – who makes that

delicious chicken and shrimp curry anyway??

We will be looking for volunteers to decorate the PDHS Christmas Tree for the Annual Festival of Lights in the Crystal Palace. This usually involves a decorating "bee", a little Christmas cheer and a lot of fun.

We also create beautiful Christmas Centrepieces for the Perth Legion Ladies Auxiliary dinner which involves another "bee" and more Christmas cheer!

All of these things are coming up in the next few months, so watch this space. If you would like to participate in any of these activities, no experience is required just a sense of fun.

Contact any PDHS Director (green badges) to put your name on a list.

Canadian Tire Money Reminder

Every year we ask you, our members, to save up your Canadian Tire Money to help fund our Junior Gardener Program which starts in April every year.

This is just a little reminder to put that funny money in a jar and give it to us every month or in one great big bundle.

The Modern Victory Garden – Still Time to Register!

If you would like to learn about growing the Modern Victory Garden, join us in Carleton Place on Saturday, October 26 from 9am - 4pm when the Master Gardeners of Eastern Ontario will present an all-day seminar on growing your own Modern Victory Garden. Come learn about permaculture, bringing "victorious vegetables" to the people, and, of course, organic techniques for dealing with those pesky veggie pests. Renowned author Janette Haas will serve up her recipe for the Modern Victory Garden. Mix and mingle with local MGs at the Read and Seed exchange, and enjoy your hosts' luscious pot-luck lunch, which helps to keep registration prices rock bottom! The cost for this day-long seminar, including lunch is only \$35. After October 15, the price rises to \$40. For details Visit www.lanarkmastergardeners.mgoi.ca or call Dale at 613 264-8135 for details.

Impatiens— It's Not Your Fault

Garden impatiens is one of the most popular bedding plants because it serves so many purposes in the garden, needs little attention and produces a solid mass of bright flowers throughout the season. It blooms happily in the shade.

This past year, there have been many reports of sickly impatiens across Lanark County. The problem is a killer fungus, a form of downy mildew (*Plasmopara obducens*). It first appears as a white layer on the underside of leaves. The leaves turn yellow and decay and eventually drop off. Within a few weeks, flowers and leaves fall off, leaving only bare branches. The stems eventually completely collapse and the plant dies. The disease spreads by airborne spores that affect perfectly healthy plants within six weeks of the plants going into the ground.

The disease is carried by the wind, which can blow spores into a nursery or a garden without warning. Don't blame the garden centre for the disease. Even people who grew their impatiens from seed at home have been impacted by it. The disease first appeared in Britain in 2002 and appears to be unstoppable as it is resistant to commercial fungicides. Outbreaks have been reported across the US and many garden centres have stopped selling Impatiens.

If an impatiens becomes infected, the plant should be disposed of as soon as possible. Do not put it in compost where the spores can over winter. Bury or burn the infected plant and if burying, it should be deeper than 50 cm.

There is risk of soil contamination so impatiens should not be planted again for a few years.

So what do you plant in their place? In very shady areas, use Asparagus Fern, Begonia, Dracaena or Ivy. In less shady areas, Coleus, Fuchsia, Ivy Geraniums, Mimulus, Nolana, Nicotiana, Lobelia, Black Eyed Susan Vine and Salpiglossis to name a few will brighten your darkened area.

New Guinea Impatiens is not impacted by this fungus and while they require more sun than the Impatiens Wallerana, they are a wonderful addition to your garden.

If you have any questions about this or other gardening issues, contact Lanark County Master Gardeners at lanarkmg@gmail.com or Dale at 264-8135.

The Other Side Of Weeds

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

Did weeds get ahead of you this year? Still have "weeds" in your garden? This may not be all bad, as weeds too have purposes and even can provide natural benefits.

So you think you know what a weed is? Did you ever think "why" you have weeds? Did you ever think about positive values and functions that weeds might provide? In a book I've had for some years and enjoy rereading, *Weeds, Friend or Foe?*, author Sally Roth covers all aspects of weeds, both the good and the bad, how to use them as well as to control them.

As the author opens, she states that "weediness is in the eye of the beholder. The word weed is an epithet of purely human invention; in the botanical world, it simply doesn't exist." She goes on to point out that even plants with no seeming redeeming value such as burdock, may be of use to others such as herbalists. So for the definition she states, "the simple answer is that a weed is a plant out of place. When a plant interferes with the tidiness of our flower gardens, the sweep of our lawn, the size of the harvest, or even our personal well-being, it's a weed."

This definition was reinforced when I visited with the head groundskeeper, David Mellor, at Fenway Park on maintaining turfgrass and weeds. His example was that even the most beautiful rose, if growing on the ball field, would be considered a "weed" in this situation.

So given lemons, how can you make lemonade? Or in this case, how can you use some of those weeds in your garden? Some home uses include for food, herbal remedies, and in crafts. Sometimes weeds are useful left in gardens, and often provide many benefits to wildlife.

Most have heard of dandelion wine, but perhaps not of the use of its leaves in salads and as greens. Varieties have even been selected for this use. The long curling and acid-rich leaves of sorrel have been used, especially in international cuisine, for a piquant flavor in soups and sauces. Even the flowers of the invasive southern kudzu vine can be candied!

Many weeds also can be used herbally and medicinally, just make sure when doing so you know exactly what weed you are using, and

how. The same applies to using them to eat.

Sorrel can be used in small amounts for its flavor, but contains oxalic acid similar to spinach and Swiss chard. With sorrel's higher concentration, too much can cause kidney damage. Some of the safe uses of weeds are topical, such as leaves of burdock on skin irritations, leaves of curly dock on boils, and leaves of dandelion applied as a wart remover.

Jewelweed, a tall impatiens (3 to 5 feet) with orange flowers, has become weedy in my gardens, the prolific seeds spreading in open areas and filling them by late summer. Yet I leave it as the hummingbirds are fond of the August flowers, and the plant I've learned has many medicinal properties. Native Americans and herbalists have used the sap for years for mosquito bites, bee stings, and rashes such as from stinging nettle and poison ivy. Simply rub the sap on the skin right after contact, and keep applying it if needed. It has other fungal skin remedies too, such as for warts, and contains the active ingredient in some formulations of Preparation-H ointment.

Perhaps the easiest and most common home use of weeds is for crafts. These may include fresh or dried arrangements. Often weeds, or wildflowers, don't last as long though as fresh garden flowers. They may also be pressed for botanical art. Or use the blossoms in potpourri.

As long as weeds aren't let go to seed, becoming seed invasive (such as the purple loosestrife), or others allowed to spread by their aggressive roots and kill out weaker plants, they may help your garden. They provide the green cover nature seems to want over bare ground, while your other plants are growing larger. This prevents germination of more aggressive weed seeds.

Shallow-rooted spreaders, such as ground ivy, provide a ground cover, preventing erosion, seed germination, and baking of heavy soils in the sun. Dock and similar tap-rooted weeds open up the soil deeply, especially useful in heavy clay soils. Clover and other legumes actually improve soil fertility, adding nitrogen. When all is said and done, pulling weeds (especially tap-rooted ones, when pulling is easier after rains) helps loosen the soil so roots of desirable plants may grow more easily.

There are many wildlife uses for weeds, including hosting more insects than you see or

can imagine. There are more good insects than bad in gardens, many being predators of the bad, or serving as food for birds. Small parasitic insects, also serving as biological controls for bad ones, feed on the nectar of many weed flowers.

Many wild mammals feed on weeds. Some weeds host the larvae of butterflies, such as the monarch larvae on milkweeds. We all have seen bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies feeding on flower nectar of many weeds. Especially important to these are the late season wildflowers, when not much else is in flower, such as goldenrod and aster.

Two wildlife aspects you may not think of are for materials and safety. Birds especially use fibers and bark from weeds, even moss, for nest building in spring. Weeds not only provide cover for wildlife, but a continuous strip or colony provides a safe corridor to move from one place to another.

You may be thinking, all these benefits sound desirable, but you don't want your gardens and landscape to look like one big weed patch. An easy solution is to reserve certain areas just for "weeds" (if there for a reason you can call them "wildflowers") that you leave through the winter and spring, with mowed areas around and containing them. Or, leave a strip along the back side of a property, a less visible area, or between other natural areas. In the case of annuals, like the jewelweed, these will die back with frost, when they can then be cleaned up. Make sure you tell visitors you're practicing sustainable, environmentally-friendly gardening.

