



Greely Gardeners

Newsletter

April/May/June 2001

Friendship in Gardening

Upcoming Meeting Dates & Topics

April 2	Organic gardening
May 7	Unusual annuals
May 26	GGG plant sale
June 4	Lawn care
July 9	GGG garden tour

From the President

Guest Speakers are a Winter Tonic!

In the depths of winter, when Spring still seems so far away, nothing lifts a gardener's spirits like talk of little green seedlings poking through the earth, and exciting new perennials to add more colour to your garden. That's what makes our monthly meetings such a tonic.

Our February speaker was Kathleen Lang, a graduate of Algonquin College horticulture program, who gave us lots of good reasons to be starting our own plants from seed this Spring. She warned that increased costs of everything from fuel to fertilizer means that bedding plants are going to be more expensive this year. Growing your own will save you money, and all you need are some simple materials, plus a place to germinate the seeds and a place to grow them on. Kathleen described her home-made system for growing seedlings under lights, and provided hints on how to avoid problems like damp off, which is caused by keeping the growth medium too moist and not having sufficient air circulation. Kathleen's talk was really informative – next Spring I'm going to try growing plants under lights too, but for now the west window of our plant room will have to do.

Members who braved the snowstorm in March match were treated to a fascinating presentation from Tony Williams. A retired medical doctor and self-taught horticulturist who specializes in unusual perennials, Tony is a familiar face to anyone who pays the occasional visit to Peter Knippel's garden centre on Bank Street. Tony told us that there are nearly 200 perennials that can be grown successfully in this area. Given only an hour, however, he restricted his talk to just three plant families, and illustrated them with books from his own collection, as well as some of his own drawings and paintings – Tony is also an artist whose drawings you can see on the cover of Gardens North catalogs, among others. It was a truly educational and enjoyable evening.

Thanks on behalf of all our members to both our guests for volunteering their time to provide us with their insights. And a special thanks to everyone for being patient while we adapt to our new meeting time. Meetings are now at 7:45 and everyone has been kind enough to help set up after the Brownies move out. Thanks also to members participating in the floral design contests. Last month was a tie between the two participants. And finally, thanks to Shelley Welchner for the article on page 2 – I'm sure you'll find it interesting. If you'd like to contribute to the newsletter, don't be shy. Read Rita's message on the back page for details.

RECORDING THE NATURAL RHYTHMS OF YOUR GARDEN

by Shelley Welchner

Have you ever heard someone say “When the daffodils bloom it’s time to plant peas” or “Plant corn when the oak leaves reach the size of a squirrels ear”? I have always been curious about the patterns of interdependency between seemingly unrelated natural events such as these. If you have ever kept a log and noted when you see your first hummingbird of the season, the flowering time of plants, or when lily beetles invade your plants, then you have been making phenological observations. Phenology is the science of periodic biological events in the animal and plant world as influenced by the environment, especially weather and climate.

The timing of trees leafing out, the arrival of insects, the bloom of flowers, and the migration of birds is related to a number of environmental factors such as day length, weather pattern and most importantly, the accumulation of warm weather. This accumulation is measured in units called degree days. Each species in the garden requires a certain number of degree days to become activated and either hatch, germinate or emerge from dormancy. This is why some plants seem to burst into the world right away, and others take their time like a long yawn and stretch before a spectacular burst later in the summer. It also explains why two unrelated events will occur at the same time during the season, year after year.

Keeping a log can help you recognize the patterns and order of events as they occur in your own garden, when to plant certain plants, when to avoid certain pests, and when to harvest before the wildlife does it for you! These are some phenological observations that others have noticed in their garden:

- ❖ The time to fertilize your lawn in the spring is when the forsythias begin to bloom.
- ❖ The robins arrive at about the same time the worms emerge from the soil.
- ❖ When the blossoms of the apple tree begin to fall, plant your corn seeds.
- ❖ Silver maples show the lining of their leaves before a storm.
- ❖ Mexican bean beetle larvae appear when foxglove flowers open.
- ❖ When the lilac plant has leafed out, plant lettuce, peas and other cool weather varieties.
- ❖ When the common lilac’s flowers have faded, plant cucumbers and squash.
- ❖ Plant tomatoes and peppers when daylilies start to bloom.
- ❖ Direct seed your morning glories when maple trees have full-size leaves.
- ❖ When dandelions are blooming, plant beets and carrots.
- ❖ Crabgrass seed germinates when forsythias are in bloom.
- ❖ When elm leaves are the size of a penny, plant kidney beans.
- ❖ When maples are beginning to unfurl their leaves, plant perennials.
- ❖ Seeing caterpillars late in the fall predicts a mild winter.

Making phenological observations is a great way to become conscious of the events in nature going on around you. This year when I notice that those pesky insects are at it again, I will take a note of other observations at the same time... Which flowers are in bloom? What is the average daily temperature? If it is early spring, how large are the maple leaves? Are there any birds that have just arrived from their wintering grounds? In following years I will be better prepared and who know, I may develop that sixth sense that some experienced gardeners seem to have... that connectedness to the natural rhythms in the garden.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FRIENDS OF THE FARM

- April 18** A lecture on magnolias by Glen Clark
- April 28-29** Crafts, Tea, Bake Sale 10am-4:00 pm. Building 72
- May 13** Rare & Unusual Plant Sale. 9am-1 pm. Parking lot, Neatby Building
- June 10-11** Annual Art Auction & Craft Sale 10am – 5:00pm Old Sheep Barn
- June 17** Donor Tree Program Tree Planting Ceremony 2 – 4pm Building 72
- June 24** Private Gardens Tour. 11am-4pm. \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. Call 230-3276
- July 1** FCEF Strawberry Social at the Museum \$4.00

NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

Manotick Horticultural Society meets 2nd Tuesday of the month, 8.00 p.m. at Tomkins Hall, St John's Anglican Church, Manotick.

Osgoode Gardening Group meets 3rd Thursday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at Osgoode Public Library. For information call Susan at 692-2782.

COGG, The Community Organization Greening Greely, meets 2nd Wednesday of the month, 7:00 at Greely Community Centre. For information call Ann Lavoie at 821-2615.

Expand Your Garden with Containers

One of the easiest ways to expand your garden is to use containers. Most vegetables can be grown in a container, providing the size of the container is adequate. Container size should be a minimum of 3 gallons to grow vegetables. Remember, the larger the container, the less often you will have to water. Remember also they must have good drainage.

Once you have picked out the container, you must fill it with a good soil mix. Never use soil right out of the garden in your containers. This soil will be too "heavy" and will not drain properly, making the dirt too compact for the soil to "breathe". I use a Pro Mix for my pots.

Now you must decide where to place your containers. Crops such as tomatoes, pepper and eggplants need full sun. Leaf and cole crops can be planted in partial shade. Most root crops can be planted in partial shade. Plants growing in a container need more attention when it comes to fertilizer. Organic gardeners can apply compost to the soil at planting time and side dress with compost or compost tea about once a week. There are many liquid commercial fertilizers on the market. Use these every other time you water, but use only about one fifth of the amount recommended on the package.

Watering is the most important chore to remember when growing vegetables in containers. The roots of a potted plant cannot grow deeper to seek water as those growing in the garden. During the growing season, check the plants morning and evening. The leaves may look a little wilted or the soil may feel dry to the touch. If this occurs, water immediately. Plants may need to be watered every day during the hot summer months. When watering, make sure to thoroughly wet the soil until water comes out the drain holes. Make sure to have someone water your container plants if you are going away for more than two days.

You can find more articles like this one on the Worldwide Web at www.icangarden.com.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

We're Growing!

This January our membership blossomed into a strong and active force. New members have already submitted articles to our newsletter. Some with horticultural background have offered to speak to the group on interesting subjects. Our meetings are buzzing with new ideas and enthusiasm. So if you're planning a garden and don't know where to start, rush over to one of our Greely Gardener meetings. You may be surprised.

This is my second issue of the GGG Newsletter and I have overcome all sorts of problems. The first being that my old computer went on the fritz and I had to buy a new one. Learning how to put a newsletter together has been frustrating because I have very little computer experience and know very little about writing. I plan to persevere and give you my best effort each publication.

Writers Wanted

The Newsletter is published for members and serves to inform you about our monthly meetings, upcoming events and activities. It is also a means to share information, ideas and accomplishments with each other. I invite and encourage all of you to submit articles on your gardening experiences. Your input is necessary and appreciated by your fellow members and will unquestionably benefit the progress of our Group's efforts. The Executive Committee will consider all articles for print. I need to receive your submissions three weeks prior to publication. The newsletter is published quarterly on the first day of the months: January, April, July and October. Your support and co-operation is appreciated.

Anyone having tips or articles to offer the newsletter can bring them to a meeting or e-mail them to me at rpateron1@eisa.com. We have four issues of the newsletter each year and your help is needed. I hope you enjoy reading the articles this month.

Rita Paterson

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Orchard View Centre is looking for someone to work in their gardens. This is a paying position for the right person. For more information, phone Jennifer at 821-2675.

MONTHLY MEETING INFORMATION

The Greely Gardeners Group meetings are held at 7:45 pm at the Greely Community Centre on the first Monday of each month, with the exception of July and August. The GGG welcomes all those interested in gardening and horticulture and affords its members the opportunity to share, learn and enjoy a common interest. Membership fee is \$10 per year. For more information please feel free to call one of our Executive Committee Members or come to one of our monthly meetings. (the first meeting is free.)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President	Bob Stanley 821-1847
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