



Greely Gardeners Newsletter

July/August/September 2001
Friendship in Gardening

Upcoming Meeting Dates & Topics

July 21	GGG members garden tour, starts from Flower Buds on Stagecoach Road, 10:00 a.m.
September 10	First meeting of the new season, topic is Lawn Care
October 1	Topic, Winterizing Your Garden

It's Here at Last...

Summer, that is. It seems no matter how carefully I plan for it over the winter, it comes too fast and ends too soon. As I write this it's June already, and I still haven't done half the things I planned to get done by the end of May. By the time you read this it will be July, and before you know it Labour Day will have rolled around again and we'll be listening out for frost warnings!

Perhaps it's because our season is so short that we take our gardens so seriously in this part of the world. In Australia, where I have family, most people pay only minimum attention to their gardens, which bloom in spite of being neglected. And friends in New Zealand write to complain of having to cut the grass all winter long – the winter being cool and wet, just perfect for a green lawn. So next time you your grumble about the shortness of the season, spare a thought for those “down under” who have to garden all year round.

Meanwhile, enjoy the summer months. I hope we'll see you on the Members Garden Tour – it's a great opportunity to see a wide variety of gardens, and maybe pick up a few ideas. If you'd like your garden to be on the tour, it's not too late. Don't be shy, just give me a call at 821-1847. And don't forget to keep your camera handy in the garden. The theme for this year's GGG photo contest is “Bugs – the good the bad and the ugly.” The results should be fascinating! Finally, be sure to mark September 10 (the Monday *after* Labour Day) for our first meeting of the new season.

Happy gardening!

Bob Stanley

Plant Sale Was a Success

The Greely Gardeners' first annual Plant Sale was held on May 26 at Andy Shields Park. Although the event wasn't widely publicized, we raised over \$120 to help support the Group's activities in the coming year. Many thanks to all those members who turned out with far more plants than we had dared hope for. Now that we know the members will support the event, we'll plan a bigger and better sale next spring. So as you survey your gardens in full bloom this

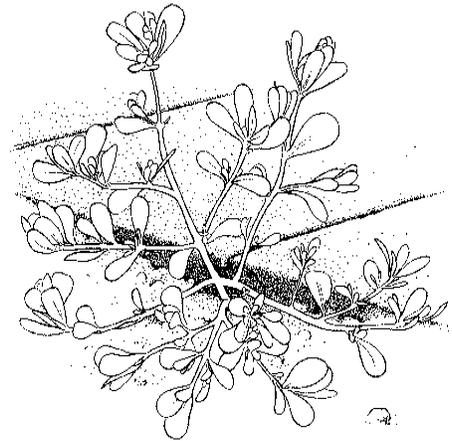
summer, make a note of perennials that will need thinning next year, and bring them along to next year's sale.

Weeds Can Tell You a Lot About Soil Quality

The notion that weeds may have some good, even desirable, qualities is hard to accept because we have been socialized to think that weeds are bad, that their presence in the garden indicates that one is lazy. Isn't it time to recognize weeds for what they are – highly adaptable plants, colonizers of disturbed ground, their virulent growth protects soil and provides a home for insects. They are the earth's way of looking after itself.

One of the more interesting attributes of weeds is what they can reveal about the condition of your soil – whether it's acid or alkaline, how well it is drained, how fertile it is. Whole colonies of weeds indicate a severe soil problem. Deep-rooted weeds such as mullein, Queen Anne's lace and dandelions thrive where soil fertility is poor. Shallow-rooted weeds, chickweed, chicory, common groundsel, common horehound and lamb's quarters are found in fertile soil. After improving soil fertility with compost or manure you should notice a change in weed composition.

Silvery cinquefoil, hop and rabbit foot clover, coltsfoot, dock, knapweed, mullein, horehound, sorrel, wild radishes and strawberries are found in soil with a pH of six or less. Weeds that prefer an alkaline soil (pH of eight or more) include mustard, thistles, chamomile, wild carrot, goldenrod, saltbush and creeping bellflower. You can change the pH of your garden by adding lots of humus. Organic matter neutralizes the pH. Most plants prefer a neutral soil with a pH of seven.



Weeds can also indicate soil composition. For example, goldenrod and bindweed are more often found in sandy soils, while plantain, chicory, chamomile and horse nettle grow in the hardpan of clay. Lots of leguminous weeds such as clover and vetch indicate that the soil is low in nitrogen. The presence of sedge indicates a salty soil. Marsh nettles, perennial sow thistle and dock grow in soggy soil where drainage is inadequate. Chamomile, pennycress and peppergrass prefer soil with high limestone content. Communities of weeds rather than lone specimens are the best indicators of soil condition. To correct conditions, prodigious amounts of compost and manure will not only give substance to sandy soils but also help to lighten clay and hardpan soil.

The long taproots of dandelions and docks not only break up hardpan but bring nutrients up to the soil surface. Clover adds nitrogen to the soil, chickweed is rich in copper, couch grass contains potassium, and lamb's quarters have a lot of iron. The last are all good plants to add to a compost pile. In general the presence of weeds indicates declining soil fertility. Many weeds thrive only when soil conditions are not optimum – mineral content is unbalanced, there's too much of one nutrient or another, or the texture is too thick (clay) or too thin (sand).

Well maintained garden soil is rich, crumbly and dark, reminiscent of the best chocolate cake! After a rain it does not form clods or pack together. Plants grow better, their root systems crowd out those weeds, their abundant vegetative growth casts a deep shade, suppressing weed growth and weed seed germination. A soil rich in organic matter has a thriving bacterial population. Weed seeds lose their viability quicker and tend to rot.

Next time you go out to weed your garden, rejoice in the knowledge that all the chickweed indicates that the soil is rich and fertile.

Melanie Watts (reprinted from Horticulture Review)

UPCOMING EVENTS

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, (except July and August) 7:00 at Greely Community Centre. For information call Ann Lavoie at 821-2615.

FRIENDS OF THE FARM

Meetings at Building 72, Arboretum 230-3276

July 1 FCEF Strawberry Social at the Agriculture Museum \$4.00

August 12 Victorian Tea and Best Hat Contest, \$5.00 for Tea, 2-4 pm

Arboretum Walks First Saturday & Sunday of the month. Call to register. \$5 (members \$4).

The Allure of Lavender

Intoxicating scents, wandlike flowers, and gray-green foliage ensure its enduring popularity

According to folklore, spouses who place lavender flowers between their bed sheets will never quarrel. Since I never quarrel with my wife, Melissa, I prefer to let lavender work its magic in my garden. I'm passionate about its flowers and foliage. It's also attractive to me because it has many uses, from lavender wands and dried flowers for potpourri to oil for aromatherapy products, colognes, lotions, and soaps.

Flowers and foliage play important roles in determining a lavender's worth. Some lavenders have unusual flower heads, while others are garden standouts for the color and shape of their foliage. When judged for their foliage, lavenders with dentated (toothed) and silver-coloured leaves are the most sought-after specimens. The small, spear-shaped leaves of lavenders are characteristically green when young and turn silvery-gray as they age. *L.3 intermedia* Fred Boutin, a lavandin cultivar, is near the top of the list for foliage colour. Its leaves brighten to a distinct silvery hue during the heat of the summer and stay silver into the winter months, when most lavenders become dull and uninspiring.

Dentation, or the rounded, teethlike shapes that adorn the margins of some leaves, is another attractive feature of a few lavender species. The leaf margins of Goodwin Creek Grey have just a few teeth at the basal end of the leaf, whereas the leaf margins of French lavender are uniformly toothed. Other lavenders with notable foliage, like Silver Frost, Ana Luisa, Richard Gray and Sawyers, were derived from crosses with woolly lavender (*L. lanata*), a plant known for its textured leaves. They all rival FredBoutin in brilliance. They inherited not only silver-colored leaves, but also the hairy leaves of woolly lavender.

The full text of this article by Andy Van Hevelingen can be found on the Worldwide Web at www.taunton.com/fg/features/plants/lavender/1.htm

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

I've moved back to the city.

Sadly, due to my husband's poor health we moved back to the city in June. I hope to be active with the GGG until the end of this term in December when you elect a new executive. I have learned a lot with the gardening group. When I moved to Greely I had been a small time gardener, growing the same vegetables each year and putting out the same annuals each spring. The GGG really opened my mind to the many facets of gardening. I now know how to build and maintain a pond, how and when perennials blossom, what weeds contribute to the soil. I am no longer a novice. Thanks to the members of the GGG. I hope my successor has the same enthusiasm for the group and that they can contribute just as much as they learn. Thank you GGG members for making my stay here a pleasure.

Writers Wanted

This 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. I need to receive your submissions at least three weeks prior to publication. The newsletter is published quarterly on the first day of the months: January, April, July and October. The deadline for the October issue is September 10. Your support and co-operation is appreciated.

If you have tips or articles to offer the newsletter you can bring them to a meeting or e-mail them to me at rpaterson1@eisa.com. We need your help to fill four issues of the newsletter each year with articles and gardening tips that are relevant to Greely gardeners. I hope you enjoy reading the articles this month.

Rita Paterson

MONTHLY MEETING INFORMATION

The Greely Gardeners Group meetings are held at 7:45 pm at the Greely Community Centre, usually on the first Monday of each month, from September through June. 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 and includes subscription to this newsletter. 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
Activities Director	Alison Whitlock 821-4469
Newsletter Editor	Rita Paterson 821-1177
Secretary	Shelagh Heatlie 821-0816