



Greely Gardeners Group

Newsletter

December 2003

GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

Meetings held the first Wednesday of the month.

Wednesday January 7, 7:15 p.m. Greely Community Centre

How are your house plants holding up this winter? Master gardener Lindley McPhail will give us some tips on how to keep them in top condition when she gives a talk on "Indoor plants: long term care, pest control and maintenance."

Wednesday February 4, 7:15 p.m. Greely Community Centre

It's February and it seems like winter will never end. Dream about a warm summer day beside a quiet pond as Darleen Scales tells us how to create and maintain a beautiful water garden. A master gardener, Darlene Scales, lives in Ashton.

Wednesday March 3, 7:15 p.m. Greely Community Centre

If you've tried it, you know it's not easy growing roses in our climate. Back by popular request, Tony Williams, of Peter Knippel Nursery, will give us tips for success when he talks on the topic of "Roses for the Ottawa garden".

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday January 13, 7:30 p.m. Manotick Horticultural Society. Monthly meeting held at Tomkins_Hall, Church Street, Manotick.

Tuesday February 10, 7:00 p.m. Friends of the Farm. Flowering Shrubs, presented by Jennifer Hendrick, Master Gardener, AAFC Horticulturist. FCEF members \$10, non-members \$15. Seating is limited. For more information or to register call 230-3276



Merry Christmas Everyone!

On Wednesday December 3 the Greely Gardeners celebrated an early Christmas with the annual Pot-Luck Christmas Supper at the Community Centre. By my count there were 22 gardeners around the table, the food was great – as always – and there was plenty of it.

Special thanks to Gill and Mike Toll, who did most of the work in preparing for this event, they even decorated the tables and provided some of the door prizes!

Thanks also to everyone who contributed prizes, delicious dishes and some refreshing beverages. The GGG Christmas supper is a tradition that's here to stay.

TIP OF THE MONTH

IS THERE A POINSETTIA IN YOUR HOUSE? *Pamper it, it'll thank you for it. Here are some tips on how to keep poinsettias looking good for months, and keeping them through the year...*

Location and Temperature – Poinsettias thrives on indirect, natural daylight. Exposure to at least six hours daily is recommended. If direct sun cannot be avoided, diffuse with a light shade or sheer curtain. To prolong the bright color of the poinsettia bracts, daytime temperatures should not exceed 20° C. Avoid placing the plants near drafts, excess heat or the dry air from appliances, fireplaces or ventilating ducts.

Water and Fertilizer – Poinsettias require moderately moist soil. Water the plants thoroughly when the soil surface feels dry to the touch. Remove the plant from decorative pots or covers, and water enough to completely saturate the soil. Do not allow the poinsettia to sit in any standing water; root rot could result which could kill the plant. It is not necessary to fertilize the poinsettia when it is in bloom.

After the Holidays – When the bracts age and lose their aesthetic appeal, usually by late March or early April, cut the poinsettia back to about 8 inches in height. By the end of May you should see vigorous new growth. Pruning may be required during the summer to keep plants bushy and compact, but do not prune after September 1. Keep the plants in indirect sun and water regularly. Place your plants outdoors, where they can bask in the warmth of spring and summer, after outside night temperatures average 55° F or above. Continue regular watering during the growth period. Fertilize every 2 to 3 weeks throughout the spring, summer and fall months with a well-balanced, complete fertilizer. Around June 1, you may need to transplant your poinsettias into larger pots. Select pots no more than 4 inches larger than the original inner pot. A soil mix with plenty of organic matter, such as peat moss or leaf mold, is recommended. If you wish, you may transplant the poinsettias into a well-prepared garden bed. Be sure the planting bed is rich in organic matter and has good drainage.

Re-flowering – The poinsettia is a photoperiodic plant, meaning that it sets bud and produces flowers as the Autumn nights lengthen. The plants will naturally come into full bloom during November or December, depending upon the flowering response time of the individual cultivar. Timing the bloom to coincide closely with the Christmas holiday can be difficult without the controlled environment of a greenhouse. Stray light of any kind, such as from outside street lights or household lamps, could delay or entirely halt the re-flowering process. Starting October 1, the plants must be kept in complete darkness for 14 continuous hours each night. Accomplish this by moving the plants to a totally dark room, or by covering them with a large box overnight. During October, November and early December, the plants require 6 - 8 hours of bright sunlight daily, with nighttime temperatures between 60 - 70° F. Temperatures outside this range may delay flowering. Continue the normal watering and fertilizer program. Following this regime for 8 to 10 weeks should result in a colorful display of blooms for next Christmas season.

Note: Despite what you may have heard, poinsettias are not poisonous, but don't try eating one! For some people the leaves can irritate the mouth and stomach, sometimes resulting in diarrhea or vomiting. The milky sap may also cause a poison-ivy like blistering if it contacts the skin unless it is immediately washed off. Poinsettia sap is an irritant, but it is not poisonous.

Greely Gardeners Group, Executive Committee

President ~ Bob Stanley 821-1847

Events Director ~ Gill Toll 821-6123

Secretary/Treasurer ~ Heather Clemenson/Gary Hall 821-7445

Membership ~ Shelagh Heatlie 821-0816