



# Greely Gardeners Group

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## Newsletter

February 2005

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### GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

*DON'T FORGET - our March meetings will be on Thursday night.  
We go back to Wednesday nights in April.*

**Thursday, March 3, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Monthly meeting. Topic: "Year 'round colour in your garden". Guest speaker: Our very own Alison Whitlock of Flower Buds Nursery.

**Wednesday, April 6, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Monthly meeting. Back by popular demand! Tony Williams from Peter Knippel Nursery will talk on the topic of "Naturalizing with wildflowers and bulbs"

**Wednesday, May 4, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Monthly meeting. Topic "Ornamental Grasses in Your Garden". Guest speaker: Suzanne Patry of Whitehouse Perennials in Almonte.

**Saturday, May 28, 9:00 a.m. to noon.** Greely Gardeners Annual Plant Sale. Andrew Shields Park, Old Prescott Highway.

**Wednesday, June 1, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Monthly meeting. Topic: "Living fences - separating flower beds, property, using trees, shrubs, and vines." Guest speaker: Neill Ritchie of Ritchie's Feed and Seed.

**Saturday, June 18, 10:00 a.m.** GGG Members Garden Tour. Starts from the Greely Community Centre parking lot.

**Saturday, July 16,** GGG's annual field trip. Details to be announced.

**Saturday, August 20,** GGG members' BBQ. Details to be announced.

**Wednesday, September 7,** Greely Community Centre. Monthly meeting. Topic: "New Plant Trends."

**Wednesday, October 5,** Greely Community Centre. Monthly meeting. Topic: "Pruning and Protection of Plants." Guest speaker, Mary-Anne Riley.

**Wednesday, November 2,** Greely Community Centre. Monthly meeting. Topic: "Container Gardening."

**Wednesday, December 7,** Greely Community Centre. Christmas Pot Luck Dinner.

### OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

**Manotick Horticultural Society** meets on the second Monday of the month, 7:30 p.m. at the Legion Hall on Ann Street in Manotick.

**Friends of the Central Experimental Farm**, one-day hands-on workshop, "Garden Stepping Stones." Saturday, April 2, 7-9 p.m. Building 72, Arboretum. Presented by Diana Dakers. FCEF members \$25, non-members \$30. Pre registration is recommended as seating is limited. To register or for more information call 230-3276.

# Canada Blooms trip cancelled

Unfortunately we have had to cancel the proposed trip to Cabada Blooms in Toronto. Only 28 people had signed up for the trip by our deadline, and we needed 39 to break even. Too bad, but obviously there just isn't enough interest out there, in spite of all the work that Shelagh and the other members of the executive put in to get the message out to other gardening groups in the area. For those who did sign up, cheques or cash will of course be returned.

## Tip of the Month

LAST MONTH WE TALKED ABOUT BUYING SEEDS. Now it's almost March, time to think about starting a few indoors to give you a head start on the season. Seeds started indoors require the same three basic conditions as those started outside – soil, light and water. But because they're in an artificial environment there are a few things you need to keep in mind.

First, avoid the fungus! One of the banes of seed growing is a fungus known as damping-off disease. The spores of this fungus are ever present in soil and the conditions of indoor gardening are perfect for it. To avoid this scourge use a sterile soil or soil-less mix – usually a combination of vermiculite and peat moss. When buying a seed-starting medium, make sure it has been sterilized! This should be clearly indicated on the packaging. After it has been thoroughly moistened, the medium can be placed in *clean* flats, peat pots, dixie cups, egg cartons, yogurt containers, etc. The size of the container will depend on what type of plant you're growing.

Seedlings need a *lot* of light or they will grow tall and spindly or "leggy." Even if you have a window that receives full sun, you might need to supplement it with artificial light. If you are using only artificial light, you'll need a great deal of it. Use bulbs that are specifically made for growing plants, place them just a foot or so above your seedlings. Be sure to raise them as the plants grow! You'll want to keep these lights on for 14 hours a day. Fluorescent tubes are ideal because they don't produce as much heat, which can quickly dry out your seedlings.

The third ingredient is water, and this is the one that will require the most attention. You want to keep the growth medium moist, but not let it become wet or soggy. It is best to water from below, allowing the medium to soak up the water like a sponge. To promote germination, many gardeners cover the flats or pots with plastic wrap. This keeps the planting medium both warm and moist, but must be removed as soon as the seeds sprout. Otherwise, you risk suffocating your young seedlings. At this point you will need to keep an eye on things to maintain the proper moisture. If you have a totally artificial setup you will probably be able to predict how often you'll need to water. If you're using a sunny window sill, you'll need to watch more closely. Placing the containers on a raised bed of gravel spread across the bottom of a large pan with a small amount of water can help to prevent your seedlings from drying out. Make sure the water level is below that of the gravel so that the plant containers rest on the gravel and *not* on the water.

If your seedlings outgrow your flats or small pots you might try thinning them and transplanting the largest to bigger containers, but for the most part you want to plant them outside just as they become large enough to survive transplanting – that usually takes about eight weeks. Check the seed packet or the catalog, many include information for starting seeds indoors. As a rule of thumb, if you're aiming to plant in late May, you shouldn't start most seeds before mid-March., You may want to provide your seedlings a little food in the form of a weak, water-soluble fertilizer. And *most important*, for a week or two before you plant them out, put your seedlings outside in a sheltered, shady spot to harden off. But be sure to bring them in if there's frost in the forecast, and beware of cold winds that can be fatal to tender seedlings.

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