



# Greely Gardeners Group Newsletter

January 2006

## GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

**Thursday, February 2, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Topic: "Vegetable Gardening." Guest speakers Pat and Steve Shapiro.

**Thursday, March 2, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Topic: "Birds and Bugs in the Garden". Guest speaker Maria MacRae of the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

**Wednesday, April 5, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Topic: "Provocative Conifers". Guest speaker Dave Dunn of the Rideau Woodland Ramble in Burritts Rapids.

**Wednesday, May 3, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Topic: "Day Lilies". Guest speaker Suzanne Patry of Whiteside Gardens in Almonte.

**Wednesday, June 7, 7:15 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. Topic: "Herbs - Drying, Storing, Hot New Herbs". Guest speakers Gerry and George from the Herb Garden in Carp.

Look for news of our summer events and Fall programme in your next newsletter

**REMINDER: YOUR 2006 MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE NOW DUE.**

**If you haven't renewed yet, please see Gary at our next meeting. Thanks.**

## OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

**Osgoode Garden Club** meets on the third Wednesday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at the Osgoode Library on Main Street. For information call Louise Boudreau 826-0385.

**Russell and District Horticultural Society** Monday, Feb. 20, 7:00 p.m. at the Legion Hall, corner of First Street and Legion Lane Ellen Wyss, a horticulturist who worked at Kew Gardens will talk about the Eden Project, a series of greenhouses set up in biodomes in an abandoned mine in England where species from all over the world are grown. \$3.00 fee for non-members.

**Manotick Horticultural Society** meets on the second Monday of the month in the RCMP Club House off Nicholl's Island Road. For information contact Mary Kealey at 823-1658.

---

## DO YOU LIKE THE NEW LOOK?

I've been doing this newsletter for five years now and I thought it was about time for a change. The "garden shed" logo was created by one of our founding members, Rita Paterson, who moved away some years ago. I've modified and "colourized" Rita's original, and picked a new typeface to give the newsletter a less formal look. Hope you like it, and by the way I'm always happy to get contributions for the newsletter at any time, so don't be shy if you have something to say.

*Bob*

## TIP OF THE MONTH

LATE WINTER AND EARLY SPRING IS A GREAT TIME to start seedlings and get the gardening season underway. Growing your own seedlings from seed is highly rewarding and can open doors to species that are not often found in garden centres. However, a couple of problems can sometimes seriously affect your chances of successfully growing seedlings. Fungus gnats and damping-off are two afflictions that commonly affect seedlings indoors. However, before you spend money on expensive chemicals, the solution to these problems may actually be much easier (and cheaper) than you suspect.

### Fungus gnats

These tiny, black insects seem innocuous enough as they buzz over your plants. While the adults rarely cause any problems to plants, if the young larvae are in large numbers they can damage your seedlings. Fungus gnats search out moist soil in which to lay their eggs. When the eggs hatch, the larvae will feed on the roots of your plants. Healthy seedlings will often be able to withstand this feeding but seedlings that have small root systems like onions and leeks and those that are showing symptoms of nutrient stress can be put back quite significantly.

The easiest way to prevent fungus gnats is to water your plants properly. Overwatering, which causes your potting mix to remain moist for extended periods of time, seems to attract fungus gnats. If your plants are already infected, allow the soil to dry out between waterings. Alternatively, sprinkle a thin layer of sand on top of your soil to confuse the adult gnats. Since the sand drains water quickly, it can sometimes trick the adults into thinking the soil is dry.

You can also reduce the gnat population by making your own sticky traps. The adults are attracted to the colour yellow. Make your own sticky trap by smearing Vaseline or Tanglefoot on a yellow surface and hang it close to where the adult gnats congregate. Lastly, potting mixes containing peat seem to be particularly affected by fungus gnats. If the problem is a recurring one for you, think about switching from a peat-based mix to one that only contains perlite and vermiculite.

### Damping-off

Not only will controlling your watering help to prevent fungus gnats, it will prevent the second most common problem, damping-off. This condition is caused by several fungi such as *Phytophthora* and *Pythium*. These fungi live at the soil line, just where air meets the moist soil surface. When your potting soil is kept continuously moist by overwatering, the fungi thrive and attack your seedlings. The telltale symptom is a constricted stem, just at or below the soil surface. Infected seedlings tend to fall over at the soil line.

Allowing the soil surface to dry out will go a long way in preventing this problem. If, for some reason, your potting mix remains wet for an extended period of time, look to your kitchen cabinet to help prevent the disease. Ground cinnamon is a natural fungicide and has been shown to be particularly effective against damping-off. Weak chamomile tea (after it has cooled) is another natural fungicide. Controlling your watering and a few home-made remedies will go a long way to guaranteeing a crop of healthy seedlings this spring.

*This article by Arzeena Hamir was adapted from [www.icangarden.com](http://www.icangarden.com)*

### Greely Gardeners Group, Executive Committee:

President ~ Gill Toll 821-6123; Vice-President ~ Anita Snelgrove 821-0447; Events Director ~ Natasha Robb-Burrows 821-1037;  
Secretary/Treasurer ~ Heather Clemenson/Gary Hall 821-7445; Past President/Newsletter ~ Bob Stanley 821-1847