



Greely Gardeners Group Newsletter

February 2006

GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

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 Burritt's 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: "GROWING, HARVESTING AND STORING HERBS". Guest speakers Gerry Bedard and Denise George from the Herb Garden in Almonte.

Saturday June 17, ANNUAL MEMBERS' GARDENS TOUR. Open to members and guests. Leaves the Greely Community Centre at 10:00 a.m. The tour takes approximately three hours. Refreshments will be provided.

Saturday, July 15 GGG's ANNUAL FIELD TRIP. Details to be announced.

Wednesday, September 6, 7:15 p.m. Greely Community Centre. Monthly meeting and AGM. Topic: "BULBS AND FALL PLANTING". Guest speaker: Neill Ritchie of Ritchie's Feed and Seed.

Wednesday, October 4, 7:15 p.m. Greely Community Centre. Topic: "IMPROVING YOUR GARDEN WITH COMPOST AND MULCH". Guest speaker: Lindley McPhail, Master Gardener.

Wednesday, November 1, 7:15 p.m. Greely Community Centre. Topic: "KEEPING YOUR INDOOR PLANTS HAPPY AND HEALTHY THROUGH THE WINTER". Guest speaker: Roger Gunthorpe, Master Gardener.

Wednesday, December 6, 7:00 p.m. Greely Community Centre. GARDENERS' CHRISTMAS SUPPER. Members and their guests. Details to be announced.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

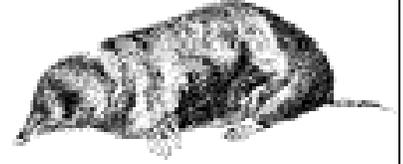
Osgoode Garden Club meets on the third Wednesday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at the Osgoode Library on Main Street. For information call Louise Boudreau 826-0385.

Russell and District Horticultural Society Monday, March. 20, 7:00 p.m. at the Legion Hall, corner of First Street and Legion Lane. Phil Reilly from Reilly's Country Gardens will give a talk on "Ornamental Grasses". \$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.

TIP OF THE MONTH

SPRING IS OFFICIALLY JUST WEEKS AWAY, which means that very soon we'll be able to get a glimpse of our lawns and see how they've survived the winter. Chances are there will be at least a few areas of your lawn that look as if they've been worked over by tiny bulldozers. The culprits, of course, are a pair of pests known as moles and voles.



These two critters have similar names, and even look similar at a quick glance (that's a mole on the right), but they really are quite different. Knowing something about them—what they eat and where they live—may help you control these furry little pests.

Moles have large, paddle-shaped front feet designed for digging their characteristic tunnels. They can dig with a force of 32 times their body weight, and dig surface tunnels at a rate of 18 feet per hour. They make surface tunnels for feeding, and deeper tunnels to unite the feeding tunnels. These deeper tunnels have those characteristic mounds of soil at the end—a sure sign you have moles instead of voles.

It is not true that moles eat plants, although they may inadvertently kill a plant by tunneling through its roots. What moles are digging for is food—especially grubs, and earthworms. By eating insects, moles can be helping to prevent insect outbreaks, and it's certainly some consolation to know they're feasting on grubs. You can try to control moles by using pesticides to control the grubs. The downside, however is that this forces the moles to eat more earthworms, which you actually want in your lawn and garden! A five-ounce mole can consume 50 pounds of insects and earthworms a year, so you may want to control moles just to prevent them from eating all your earthworms!

There are some commercial repellent products, and even more home remedies, most of which are probably more annoying to humans than moles, and are rarely effective. Poison baits are not recommended as they can endanger other wildlife as well as pets and children. The best control seems to be traps. Try placing a mousetrap, baited with peanut butter, at the opening of an active tunnel. Then cover the opening and the trap with a clay pot. This keeps other critters out of the trap, and makes the mole think the trap is in the tunnel. Other trap types are available from garden centres and hardware stores. Traps are most effective in spring and fall when moles are most active.

Voles are often called **meadow mice** or **field mice**, and they resemble mice with short tails. Like moles they make extensive tunnel systems, but unlike moles they are guilty of eating plants. Although they mainly feed on stems and seeds of grasses, they will feed on most ornamental plants too. They often gnaw on plants, sometimes girdling trees beneath the snow cover, or eating the roots of perennials. Obviously these plants are weakened if not outright killed as a result. Organic fertilizers may smell good if you're a vole, so keeping these fertilizers away from plants in areas where voles are active may help to reduce their damage.

Techniques for controlling voles are similar to those for moles. The least toxic approaches to vole control include keeping gardens weeded, and grass mown, thus removing habitats. Avoid mulching too deeply, and in late Fall don't pile up mulch around roses or other shrubs until the ground is frozen, otherwise you may just be inviting the little critters to make their homes there. Also, in the winter try to keep snow away from bases of trees and shrubs. It's also worth using plastic tree protectors on young trees. These are cheap, reusable and effective.

AN EXTRA TIP FROM ALISON: This winter we have had a lot of freezing rain, resulting in a thick ice cover. Our resident professional gardener, Alison Whitlock, suggests you break up that ice cover around trees to avoid possible pest damage. Alison says she has seen quite large trees destroyed by mice (voles?) completely stripping the bark below the ice surface. "They are trapped down there and they will eat whatever they can find," she says.

For lots more information about moles and voles and how to control them, pay a visit to the website of Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency. There's an entire section on these little pests, and you can even download a PDF document for future reference. The web address is a long one:

www.pmra-arla.gc.ca/english/consum/molesandvoles-e.html

DON'T FORGET THE PLANT SALE

Once the snow has gone of course we'll all be out there in the garden as early as we can. Among other things, Spring in the garden is a time for dividing perennials and rooting out some of those self-seeding annuals that have sprung up where they're not wanted. Some of us also start far more seedlings than we actually need so have lots of left-overs. Don't throw out any of these orphaned plants! The Greely Gardeners' annual plant sale is scheduled for May 27 and your unwanted plants are just what we need to stock the tables.

So please, don't put them in the compost. Pot up all your extras and unwanted orphans, put them in a safe corner and don't forget to water them once in a while. The plant sale is our major fundraising event of the year. It's what enables us to bring in good speakers and helps offset some of our other costs - your \$10 a year doesn't cover everything.

Closer to the event we'll talk about what to do if you need extra containers for your plants, or need help getting plants to the sale. Meanwhile, keep the plant sale in mind, and maybe put a few dollars aside just in case you happen to find that rare perennial you've always wanted for your garden on one of our tables.

GGG'S SPRING FLIER

Early in March you can expect to see a flier advertising the Greely Gardeners' Group annual programme in the mail. This flier is prepared by your executive and the cost of printing and mailing to all homes in the Greely area is offset by the ads on the inside. In past years this flier has always brought in many new members, so talk it up with your neighbours and let's see if we can set another new record for membership this year!

FINAL REMINDER...

2006 MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE NOW DUE. The fee is unchanged at just \$10 for the year. If you haven't renewed yet, please see Gary at our next meeting. This newsletter is for GGG members. Regretfully, if you haven't renewed your membership by next month, we'll have to remove your name from the distribution list.

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