



Greely Gardeners Group Newsletter

December 2006

Merry
Christmas
to Greely
Gardeners



And happy
gardening
in the
New Year!

GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

Thursday, January 4, 7:00 p.m. Greely Community Centre. GARDENING Q&A WITH PETER AND JOAN KNIPPEL, of Peter Knippel Nursery on Bank Street. If you have gardening questions (and who doesn't?) now is your chance to get answers from the knowledgeable Knippels, so come prepared.

Thursday, February 8, 7:00 p.m. Greely Community Centre. USING SHRUBS IN GARDEN DESIGN. Most of us have at least a few shrubs in our gardens. But making full use of them to enhance the design of your garden requires both art and science. Our own Alison Whitlock, of Flower Buds Nursery, will give tips on how to choose and position shrubs for maximum effect, and how to maintain them so that they don't take over your beds.

Thursday, March 8, 7:00. Greely Community Centre. Spring is coming and soon it will be time to do something about those overgrown trees and shrubs that you meant to tackle last Fall. Help is at hand as the ever-popular Lee Boltwood, Master Gardener, returns to give us a hands-on demonstration of pruning techniques.

NOTE: Our first three meetings of 2007 are on Thursday nights, not the usual first Wednesday. This is to avoid having to compete with the joyful sounds of The Greely Players, who rehearse in the hall next to ours on Wednesday nights.

Wednesday, April 4, 7:00 p.m. Greely Community Centre. ORNAMENTAL GRASSES. Guest speaker: Phil Reilly, from Reilly's Country Gardens. Phil is an expert on this topic, and his illustrated talk is one you won't want to miss.

Wednesday, May 2, 7:00 p.m. Greely Community Centre. THE FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN. Guest speaker: Sandra Garland. An introduction to this unique Ottawa attraction right next door to the Arboretum. Sandy will take us on a virtual tour of the garden and give some tips on how to attract wildlife to your own garden. She's also offered us a live tour of the garden in June. More about that later.

A big thankyou...

To Sheelagh and *all* the others who helped to make this year's GGG Christmas Pot Luck Dinner a wonderful start to the Christmas season. The food was great, and the company was even better. This event is one GGG tradition that is definitely here to stay. Look forward to seeing you all in 2007!

TIP OF THE MONTH....



CHANCES ARE JUST ABOUT EVERYONE reading this newsletter has at least one in their home. I'm talking about poinsettias. Literally millions of these plants are sold at this time of year — in a matter of weeks. Their myriad colours, sizes and shapes have made them *the* favourite Christmas flower in most homes.

But how much do you know about your poinsettia? Where do they come from? Are they really poisonous? Can you keep them for next year? For more than you really needed to know about poinsettias, read on ...

Poinsettias are native to Mexico, where they grow wild. While it is known to botanists as *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, the plant gets its popular name from one Joel Robert Poinsett, an amateur botanist and the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico. In 1825 Poinsett brought some cuttings to his plantation in Greenwood, South Carolina, and the rest, as they say, is history.

So much for fact. The Christmas connection of the poinsettia dates back to a Christmas Eve centuries ago in Mexico, when a little girl named Pepita had no gift to present to the Christ child. On her way to the church she gathered up weeds along the road. Then, according to legend, a miracle unfolded. As she approached the altar, the weeds bloomed into vibrant flowers — *Flores de Noche Buena*, or Flowers of the Holy Night. The Aztecs called the poinsettia Cuetlaxochitl — and you thought poinsettia was hard to pronounce! They made a reddish purple dye from the bracts. In Chile and Peru, the poinsettia is known as the Crown of the Andes and sometimes as the Flame Leaf Flower. In nature, they're a perennial flowering shrub that can grow up to ten feet in height.

Today, poinsettias range in colour from white to pink to traditional red, with shades of peach and yellow in between, with more than 100 varieties available. Newer varieties boast marbled, flecked, and even wrinkled bracts (the coloured portion of the plant).

The belief that poinsettias are poisonous, is simply an urban myth, according to CBC radio's gardening guru Ed Lawrence, and other plant experts, although it might give you an upset stomach if you were foolish enough to eat a plateful! For good measure, researchers at Ohio State University have proved the poinsettia to be non-toxic to both humans and pets. However, keeping the plant out of reach of pets, especially cats, is a good idea, to avoid stomach upset from the fibrous tissues.

When selecting poinsettias, look for plants with thoroughly coloured and expanded bracts, plentiful green foliage, strong stems, and no signs of wilting. Care and handling is easy. Poinsettias like indirect sunlight, room temperatures, and light to moderate soil moisture. Over-watering and excessive temperatures are the most common causes of any problems. Avoid cold drafts, excessive heat and soggy soil. With a little care, your poinsettias last through Christmas and beyond. And come Spring you can move them outside to grow them on for next year.... but that's a story for another day.

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!

Greely Gardeners Group, Executive Committee:

President ~ Gill Toll 821-6123; Vice-President ~ Anita Snelgrove 821-0447; Secretary ~ Heather Clemenson;
Treasurer ~ Gary Hall 821-7445; Social ~ Shelagh Heatlie 821-0816; Past President/Newsletter ~ Bob Stanley 821-1847