



# Greely Gardeners Group Newsletter

January 2007

## GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

**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 Lee Boltwood, Master Gardener, returns to give us a hands-on demonstration of pruning techniques.

**NOTE:** Our February and March meetings are on Thursday nights. 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.

**Saturday, May 26, 9:00 a.m. to noon** the GGG's Annual Spring Plant Sale, Andrew Shields Park.

**Wednesday, June 6, 7:00 p.m.** Greely Community Centre. CONTAINER GARDENING WITH PERENNIALS. Guest speaker: Darrell Kekanovich from Ritchie's Feed and Seed.

We'll take our usual break from meetings in July and August, but that doesn't mean there won't be any activities. There's the guided tour of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden mentioned above, there's the Members' Gardens Tour, and we plan a day trip by bus to the Montreal Botanical Gardens. More about these and any other summer events in future newsletters.

## 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** meets on the third Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at the Legion Hall, corner of First Street and Legion Lane.

**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.

**Friends of the Farm** Lecture on the history of the Central Experimental Farm. Wednesday, February 21, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Speaker: Julie Harris, public historian and author of the C.E.F. Management Plan. Location: Building 72, in the Arboretum. \$12 for FCEF members, \$15 for non-members. For information or to register call 613-230-3276 or email: info@friendsofthefarm.ca

## TIP OF THE MONTH....

**HERE'S THE BEST TIP YOU'LL GET ALL YEAR — IF YOU HAVEN'T YET RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2007, DO IT SOON!**

It's still just \$10 for the year, which includes 10 monthly meetings, with coffee and munchies, as well as many other events. You benefit from the friendship and advice of fellow gardeners and you learn a lot from our guest speakers. And of course you get this monthly newsletter — but not for much longer if you haven't renewed! You can renew as you come in the door at our next meeting.

### GO GREEN, START A COMPOST PILE

So how are your New Year's resolutions holding up? The trouble with vowing to give some bad habit is that it's usually a lot easier to start a habit than to break one. Right? So here's tip number two: let me recommend starting the habit of compost making — you'll be doing your bit for a greener world, you'll be helping reduce the amount of waste the city has to find room for, and you'll be enriching your garden too.

Composting involves the break down or decay of waste organic matter by fungi and bacteria. The "green" waste suitable for composting includes fruit and vegetable peelings, grass clippings, dead flowers, and so on. The "brown" waste suitable includes shredded non-glossy paper, straw and chopped up twigs. There is no reason why we should toss these materials into expensive garden waste bags, when we can turn them into rich compost in our own gardens. Working well-rotted compost into your beds will improve the structure of either heavy or sandy soils. Compost also acts as a slow release plant food.

Composters are easy to build. One of the cheapest and easiest methods is to get your hands on four old wooden pallets, attach them at the corners to four wooden stakes driven firmly into the ground, and you have yourself a well-ventilated composter. Or you can buy one of the many types available from Lee Valley and other garden stores. Ideally, locate your composter in partial sunlight, as full sun will cause contents to dry out, slowing the decomposition process. Your compost heap should be well ventilated, and make sure that the base is in direct contact with the soil. This will allow fat, juicy earthworms to enter the mix and speed up decomposition.

Another important factor affecting the speed of decomposition is moisture, too much or too little will cause compost formation to become a long drawn out affair. When adding very dry materials such as untreated wood shavings or cardboard it helps maintain the heap's moisture level by lightly sprinkling the layer with water. You could of course add a water-rich "green" material such as grass clippings, however you should follow this again with an equal layer of "brown" high carbon material such as straw or shredded paper. An excess of brown material slows the formation of compost whereas an excess of green material for example grass clippings results in a slimy silage heap exuding all manner of smells and juices.

Your well-layered compost heap will take around nine months to provide you with its brown gold, if the balancing act of moisture, air, heat and materials is achieved. It will be well worth the wait.

### THIS MINT IS THE CAT'S MEOW!

Each year the Perennial Plant Association in the US votes on a "perennial of the year". This is a plant most of the members feel deserves wider use and recognition. The winner for 2007 is Walker's Low Catmint. As the name indicates, it is in the mint family, it has square stems and aromatic leaves, and is said to be much less attractive to cats than its relatives. It does, though, contain the chemical nepetalactone which is what is so attractive to cats in the true catnip species (*cataria*).

Walker's Low Catmint is attractive to some forms of wildlife such as bees and butterflies, but not rabbits and deer to which it is resistant. The name is deceiving, as this plant is not really low... it can reach about three feet tall and wide, making it one of the larger catmints. Rather, it is named for the location in an Irish garden where it was "discovered" by a Mrs. Patricia Taylor in the 1970s.

### 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