



Greely Gardeners Group Newsletter

April 2007

GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

NEXT MEETING 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 this summer.

Saturday, May 26, 9:00 a.m. to noon the GGG's Annual SPRING PLANT SALE, Andrew Shields Park. When you're busy dividing perennials in your garden, don't forget to put up a few for the garden sale. And please make sure they are clearly labelled. More details about the plant sale at the May 2 meeting.

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

Saturday, June 16 MEMBERS FIELD TRIP to the MONTREAL BOTANICAL GARDENS. A few tickets are still available for this trip. Cost is \$40 for members (\$50 for guests), includes private bus to Montreal and back, admission to the gardens, and a guide. If you want to go and haven't booked yet, see Melody Tomka at the May 2 meeting, or call her at 613-821-1985.

Saturday June 23, 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.

Wednesday, September 5, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. IRISES IN BLOOM FROM SPRING TO SEPTEMBER, Guest speaker: Iris expert and judge Sandy Ives of the Canadian Iris Society.

Wednesday, October 3, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: WINTERIZING YOUR GARDEN. "Guest" speaker: Bob Stanley.

Wednesday, November 7, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: SUCCESS WITH AFRICAN VIOLETS. Guest speaker: Owen Munn of the Ottawa Horticultural Society.

Wednesday, December 5, GARDENERS' CHRISTMAS SUPPER, Greely Community Centre. Members and their guests.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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.

Plant Sale, May 13, 9 am to 1 pm, presented by Friends of the Farm and numerous specialty growers and nurseries. A perfect Mother's Day outing! In the parking lot of the Neatby Building, Carling & Maple Drive, Central Experimental Farm. Admission is a non-perishable donation to the Food Bank or \$5. For information, call 613-230-3276 or visit www.friendsofthefarm.ca.

TIP OF THE MONTH...

NOW THAT WINTER WEATHER HAS FINALLY GONE (WE HOPE) it's time to think about spring cleaning — and that includes the great outdoors. Spending some time in the garden early in the season can really pay off. Start with the lawn — the biggest part of most gardens. There are lots of little things you can do to help spruce up your lawn right now. So don't wait for the really warm weather, an early spring cleanup will put you ahead of the game.

First, give the entire lawn a light once-over with a rake, taking care not to disturb any new grass plants by raking too hard. In addition to clearing leaves, twigs and other debris left over from last fall, the first raking of the year is an opportunity to assess any winter damage. Look for early signs of pests or disease, and nip them in the bud before they cause big problems.

If raking reveals signs of thatch build-up you should consider using a dethatching rake or power dethatcher to clean away the layer of tangled roots and stems that can keep out sunlight and choke your lawn. It takes some elbow grease, but it will help clear the way for new growth. This job is a lot easier if you do it regularly — say every second or third year.

If your lawn is heavily used throughout the year the soil may have become compacted. Aerating loosens the soil and lets water, air and fertilizer get down to the grass plant's root structure. For smaller lawns, or for concentrated trouble spots, use a manual aerating tool that removes plugs of soil from the turf. For large lawns you may want to rent a power aerator, or consider paying a lawn maintenance company to do the aerating and dethatching.

Go after weeds early, before they have a chance to get established and spread. Remove dandelions and other broadleaf weeds with a "step-on" weeder. All you do is place the tool over the weed, step on the footrest, and pull the weed up. You can find this type of weeder at most garden centres. The advantage of doing this now is that the ground is still soft so you should be able to get roots and all. And remember, cultivating a healthy lawn is one of the simplest ways to prevent weeds.

With that in mind, top dress the lawn by spreading a thin layer of peat moss with a rake. Top dressing helps to gradually condition your lawn throughout the year, strengthening the grass so it can resist disease, weeds and thatch, and reducing the amount of water and fertilizer it needs. And while you're at it, fix any bare spots. Just clear away the dead-material, loosen the soil, work in a little peat moss, sprinkle a generous handful of good quality grass seed, and keep the area moist until it the seed germinates. Finish off this lawn tune-up with an application of a balanced, organic fertilizer. Chemical fertilizers with a high nitrogen content (high first number) give your lawn an instant boost but do little for your lawn's long-term health.

Finally, give your tools a spring tune-up too. Spend a few minutes in the garage or storage shed making sure your tools — mower, clippers, string trimmer — are in good working condition before you need to use them for the first time. If you have a gas-powered mower or lawn tractor it will benefit from an annual tune-up. If you're handy you can do it yourself. If not, most dealers offer a tune-up package this time of year. Replace the oil and filters, clean or replace the spark plug, and charge the battery. And for all types of mowers, sharpen the blade, clean the underside of the deck and lubricate moving parts. Now you're ready to go.

Greely Gardeners Group, Executive Committee:

President - Gill Toll 821-6123; Vice-President - Anita Snelgrove 821-0447; Secretary - Heather Clemenson 821-7445;
Treasurer - Gary Hall 821-7445; Social Coordinator - Shelagh Heatlie 821-0816; June MacDonell - 821-1949;
Melody Tomka 821-1985; Melissa MacDonald — 821-9680; Past-President/Newsletter — Bob Stanley 821-1847