



Greely Gardeners Group

Newsletter

May 2008

GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

Wednesday, June 4, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: WHAT'S BUGGING YOU? HOW TO CONTROL LAWN AND GARDEN INSECTS NATURALLY. Guest speaker: entomologist Penny MacDonald. With the upcoming ban on the use of pesticides (if you haven't already stopped using them) you won't want to miss this explanation of how to keep your lawn looking great without chemicals. NOTE: This is our last indoor meeting until September.

Saturday, June 14, 10th ANNIVERSARY BARBECUE, 4:00 p.m. That's right, it's been 10 years since the GGG got started, and we're celebrating. The BBQ will be held at the home of Melody Tomka, 6719 Bank Street (about halfway between Greely and Metcalfe, on the left). It is open to all GGG members and their immediate family. Burgers, sausages and coffee will be provided, but bring your own salads, drinks, etc. Plenty of parking on site. **IMPORTANT:** In order to provide enough food we need to know how many people are coming. If you haven't already signed up, please do so at the June 4 meeting. If you can't make that meeting but want to come to the BBQ, call Shelley at 821-1120. See you there!

Saturday, August 9, ANNUAL MEMBERS GARDENS TOUR. The tour starts at 9:00 a.m. from the Community Centre parking lot and lasts about four hours. There will be refreshments and eats at the last garden on the tour. More details and a map will be provided in your July newsletter.

Wednesday, September 3, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: HOSTAS FOR YOUR SHADE GARDEN. Guest speaker: Maureen Mark.

Wednesday, October 1, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: MULCHING AND EASY CARE GARDENING. Guest speaker: the ever-popular Patti Pokorchuck from Down-to-Earth Gardens.

Wednesday, November 5, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE GARDENS. "Guest" speaker: our very own Heather Clemenson with her personal slide collection from some of England's most glorious gardens to brighten up a November night.

Wednesday, December 3: Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. ANNUAL CHRISTMAS POT-LUCK DINNER, where our members show that they are not just great gardeners but great cooks too. Don't miss it!

OTHER GARDENING EVENTS

Manotick Horticultural Society usually meets on the second Monday of the month at 7:30 in the RCMP Club House off Nichols Island Road. For more information call Margot Belanger at (613) 692-1575 or email rbelan1575@rogers.com.

Osgoode Garden Club meets on the third Wednesday of the month, 7:00 p.m. in the Fred Alexander room of the Osgoode Community Centre.

Russell & District Horticultural Society meets on the third Monday of the month, 7:00 at the Russell Legion. For information call Lindsey McPhail at 613-445-0754.

TIP OF THE MONTH

EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE A VEGETABLE GARDEN, how can you resist putting in a few tomato plants? Nothing beats the taste of a home-grown tomato, and now that the soil is finally warming up and the danger of a late frost is past (in theory anyway) here are a few tips on how you can grow great tomatoes in your garden.

For starters, one of the keys to success with tomatoes is to remember that they like a nice warm area with at least 8 hours of sunlight a day in order to produce sturdy plants and lots of juicy red fruit. They like soil that is fertile, deep, well-drained, and that is rich in organic matter. For best results, work in a good amount of compost or organic matter. A general guide would be 3 inches of organic matter into the top 6 inches of soil. You want soil that will hold water as evenly as possible, but don't over-water because uneven uptake of water can cause all kinds of problems with tomatoes including flower drop, fruit splitting and blossom-end rot.

Most tomato varieties need some kind of support once they begin producing fruit -- although some people prefer to just let them ramble. For support you can use stakes or cages, or grow them against a fence and tie them up.

Lastly, many tomato diseases reside in the soil and affect peppers, eggplants, potatoes, and other crops in the nightshade (*Solanaceae*) family. To break the disease cycle, and to help get rid of the disease-causing organisms, rotate tomatoes with unrelated crops, such as corn, beans or lettuce, or make room for a tomato or two in your flower beds.

Heirlooms or Hybrids?

Heirloom varieties are open-pollinated cultivars that were introduced many generations ago, and have been saved, maintained and handed down. Heirlooms are often not as productive as hybrids, but they typically taste better, and you can save their seeds from one season to the next. Most heirlooms are "indeterminate" types, meaning they keep on growing and growing throughout the season until the frost gets them.

Hybrids, on the other hand, are tomatoes whose breeding has been controlled, and organized for specific reasons. For example, they often have disease-resistance bred into them that heirlooms lack. Hybrids usually produce higher yields, they generally mature earlier and more uniformly, they are limited in size and many have better fruit quality (though not necessarily better taste!).

If you want to avoid hybrids and plant heirlooms only, look at that tag, there will usually be a "F1" rating for hybrids. If you want the disease-resistant tomatoes, buy hybrids. To tell what diseases a hybrid can withstand, look at the letters after its name on the plant tag. For example, VFFNTA means the plant is resistant to Verticillium wilt, Fusarium races 1 and 2, root knot Nematodes, Tobacco mosaic virus, and Alternaria stem canker. A plant marked VFFNTA would be a good choice for you to try if diseases have killed your tomatoes in the past.

Greely Gardeners Group, Executive Committee:

President - Gill Toll 821-6123; Vice-President - Anita Snelgrove 821-0447;
Treasurer – Melissa MacDonald 821-9680; Secretary – Shelagh Heatlie 821-0816;
Melody Tomka 821-1985; Shelley Piercey 821-1120; June MacDonell 821-1949;
Past-President/Newsletter Bob Stanley 821-1847