



# Greely Gardeners Group

## *Newsletter*

July 2008

### GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

**Saturday, August 9,** ANNUAL MEMBERS GARDENS TOUR. The tour starts at 9:00 a.m. from Greely Community Centre and lasts about four hours. The tour this year will include three gardens in Greely, one in Vernon and one in Russell, where refreshments and snacks will be available. We'll carpool as much as possible, and maps will be provided so no-one gets lost. **IMPORTANT:** If you plan to come on the tour please email or phone Bob (stanleyb@rogers.com) so we'll have an idea of how much food to provide.

**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](mailto: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.

### INVASIVE GARLIC MUSTARD SPOTTED IN GREELY



New GGG member Jan Brown wrote to me last month to warn that Garlic Mustard has arrived in Greely. "I spotted some the other day on Fox Valley Drive. My brother lives in Grand Bend on Lake Huron and the entire area has been overgrown with it," she says. Garlic mustard is described by the Nature Conservancy of Canada as "one of Ontario's most invasive alien species of woodland plants." Originally from Europe, it will overwhelm other native species, so if you spot any in your neighbourhood, root it out! For more information just Google "garlic mustard". Thanks for the heads-up Jan.

## TIP OF THE MONTH...



PUT ANY MOLASSES ON YOUR GARDEN LATELY? That's right – molasses. It's amazing what you can turn up when you search the Web for tips on organic gardening! Apparently molasses is a great fertilizer booster for your garden and is commonly used by organic gardeners to bring greater health to their soils and plants. It provides a quick source of energy for the various forms of microbes and soil life in a compost pile or the soil as well as being a great source of carbohydrates that stimulates the growth of beneficial microorganisms.

Molasses is apparently an excellent chelating agent, which means that it can help convert some chemical nutrients into a form that is easily available for organisms and plants to use. But before you start pouring the sweet, black syrupy stuff on your garden, there are a few things you should know. There are several grades and types of molasses, depending upon the maturity of the sugar cane or sugar beet, and the method of extraction. It's not just the sugar content that makes molasses useful, but its trace minerals. For gardeners, blackstrap molasses is the best choice because it is the most nutritionally valuable, containing the greatest concentration of sulfur, potash, iron, and micronutrients from the original cane material.

Blackstrap molasses can be used alone, but is better as a component in both sprays and soil drenches, and is best when applied to soil in conjunction with organic fertilizers. For example, you can mix it with alfalfa meal and water to make a "tea" that your plant will just love.

Alfalfa meal is another organic fertilizer. Available in pelleted form at Ritchie Feed and Seed, it contains nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium as well as triacontanol, a hormone that is a natural root stimulant. Suitable as a soil amendment for all kinds of plants, it is great for lawns as an alternative to chemical fertilizers, and your roses will love it. Alfalfa is also great for revving up the compost pile by adding quick nitrogen to break down carbon-rich materials such as weeds and leaves. Because it is an organic fertilizer, alfalfa may be applied any day, any time of day, and at any amount without fear of burning your grass. The recommended rate for lawns is about 5 kg per 100 square metres. Unlike chemical fertilizers it takes a little while to show results – be patient, it takes about three weeks for the microbes to process the protein before you will see the benefit in the grass. You may need to make a second application three weeks after the first, and then your lawn will be green and healthy – and chemical free.

### **Here's a recipe for a molasses and alfalfa tea:**

Add 1 cup of alfalfa meal and 3 tbsp blackstrap molasses to 15 litres (3 US gallons) of water. Stir until dissolved, then leave to steep for 24 hours. Then it's ready to be used as a soil drench or foliar feed. Molasses can also be used in conjunction with any liquid organic fertilizer to give your plants a little extra boost.

**WARNING:** I haven't actually tried molasses on my garden yet – I'm still wondering about the effect it might have on the ant population!

### **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