Volume 2 | Issue 3

Garden Club of Madison

Horticulture Bulletin

March, 2022

Welcome to the Horticulture Committee's seventh Quarterly Bulletin! We hope you find it helpful. The next issue will be distributed by email in early June 2022.

Perennial Garden Preparation & Planting

Preparation:

As spring begins, start your garden cleanup. Clear away dead leaves and other debris, such as last year's foliage and ornamental grass plants.

Start weeding your garden when the soil isn't too wet or too dry. If any of your plants were lifted by frost, gently press them back into the ground.

Get your soil tested to find out what nutrients should be added. Contact the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at 203-974-8521. Instructions on collecting soil for testing is available on https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/Soil-Office/Soil-Office/Soil-Testing-Offices-Instructions

Fertilize bulbs as soon as you see the foliage start up, as they take in more nutrients when actively growing. It's good to add an inch or two of compost (around other perennials, too).

To preserve your bulbs, remove their spent blooms, but leave the foliage intact until it expires on its own.

Planting:

Existing perennials can be divided and transplanted to encourage new growth when they get to be 3-4" high. If larger, transplants may benefit from cutting back by one-third to one-half.

- Summer- and autumn-flowering perennials can be transplanted and divided in spring.
- Spring-flowering plants such as primroses, bleeding hearts, epimediums, hellebores and forget-me-nots can be divided *after* they flower. (last year)
- And once the chance of frost is finished (later in May), you can plant summer-blooming bulbs like dahlias, lilies, gladiolus, irises and crocosmias.

To preserve your plants, add fresh mulch and add stakes for peonies, asters, baptisia, delphiniums or any other perennials that require support.

Provided by Judith Tosiello

Spring Pruning in April

Weather and temperatures during late winter and early spring in New England can be unpredictable. For Connecticut, April is usually a safe time for pruning the following plants.

Summer Blooming Plants

Plants that bloom on this year's wood [NEW wood] are summer bloomers. Their buds develop in late spring/early summer. April is considered a good time to prune in our region. Cut back old wood, remove dead branches, and prune crossing stems – to allow room for new growth, which encourages more flowers.

Here are examples:

-- Abelia grandiflora
-- Buddleia davidii [Butterfly Bush] (But not Buddleia alternifolia that blooms in spring)
-- Callicarpa [Beautyberry]
-- Caryopteris [Blue Mist]
-- Cephalanthus occidentalis [Buttonbush]
-- Clethra [Summersweet, Sweet Pepperbush]
-- Hibiscus syriacus [Rose of Sharon]
-- Hydrangea paniculata
-- Hydrangea arborescens
(NOTE: Don't prune varieties of hydrangea that bloom on old wood)
-- Hypericum [St. Johnswort]
-- Potentilla fruticosa [Bush Cinquefoil]
-- Salvia yangii; previously known as Perovskia atriplicifolia [Russian Sage]
-- Spirea (Only summer blooming varieties. Don't prune spring bloomers such as Spirea x vanhouteii or Spirea prunifolia)
-- Symphoricarpos [Snowberry] Berry-like fruits grow on 2-year old wood, so prune stems that have fruited and aren't producing laterals.

Shrubs with Red or Yellow Stems

Shrubs that are grown for their colored winter stems can be pruned after they have been established for a few years. The most colorful stems are usually year-old growth.
Examples of shrub dogwoods and shrub willows with colored stems:

-- Cornus alba
-- Cornus sanguinea
-- Cornus stolonifera
-- Salix alba

Grey-Leaved Plants

Some grey-leaved plants need trimming in spring to remain neat and dense:

-- Santolina chamaecyparissus
-- Helichrysum angustifolium
-- Salvia yangii / Perovskia (also mentioned above)

Plants with Seeds for Birds in Winter

Plants with seed heads that were left up for birds during winter can be trimmed in April.
Examples include:

-- Agastache foeniculum [Blue Hyssop]
-- Coreopsis verticillata
-- Echinacea purpurea [Coneflower]
-- Eupatorium maculatum [Joe Pye Weed]
-- Liatris spicata
-- Oenothera lindheimeri [Guara]
-- Penstemon digitalis [White Beardtongue]
-- Phlox paniculata
-- Rudbeckia hirta, Rudbeckia subtomentosa, Rudbeckia triloba [Black-eyed Susan]
-- Solidago [Goldenrod]
-- many types of perennial grasses

To Protect Root Crowns

Waiting to prune in spring can benefit some perennials so that their foliage protects the root crown during winter. Some examples include:

-- Asclepias tuberosa [Butterfly Weed]
-- Chrysanthemum
-- Lobelia cardinalis [Cardinal Flower]
-- Stachys byzantina [Lamb's Ear]

Roses

There are many varieties of roses, with different pruning times. The goal is to remove weak, unproductive, and dead stems -- to encourage vigorous new stems to grow. Consult a pruning source for your specific type of rose.

Sap to Consider

-- Dictamnus albus [Dittany] The foliage contains an oil and the sap's irritants are not as pronounced in its dormant stage in early spring.
-- Do not prune Maples in spring since this is their time of active growth, and most will bleed sap profusely if pruned now.

Diseased Foliage

If plants have clear signs of bacterial or fungal disease, prune away all affected foliage and put it in the trash [not in a compost pile]. You don't want diseased plants to spread microbes to other plants. Clean your tools carefully.

Note about Spring Bloomers

Spring-blooming plants flower on last year's wood [OLD wood]. Their flower buds were set the previous year, approximately 4-6 weeks after they finished flowering. Don't prune spring-blooming plants in early spring since you will cut off the flower buds. Wait and prune them soon after they bloom.
Provided by Denise Forrest

Teach Children About Bees

Data from the United Nations reports about 35% of invertebrate pollinators, particularly bees and butterflies, **face extinction globally**. This alarming number is very troubling for many reasons – but particularly worrisome since approximately 85% of flowering plants, including many crops, need bees and other pollinators to reproduce, according to the Xerces Society.

Butterflies are easy to love, but it is important to teach children the value of bees and not be afraid of them. When searching for options, I was delighted to discover a number of books and videos to help kids learn about bees. Here are just a few to consider:

Give Bees A Chance by Bethany Barton

This book shows younger children the importance of bees. In a cartoon style, the author explains that there are 25,000 kinds of bees, describes how bees make honey, and tells how bees help plants and food. Plus, many types of bees are carefully illustrated.

Being A Bee by Jinny Johnson

Kids can learn fascinating facts about bees, life in a hive, bee families, how bees work together, and how they communicate with other bees. This book introduces the idea of conservation, why we must protect bees, why bees need our help to survive, and ways we can help them.

Bring Back the Pollinators by Xerces Society

This video is good for older children. Beautiful photography and concise narration show the value of bees and other pollinators, and explains the need to help them. Watch it free on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=chvXwNbs3SA

Provided by Denise Forrest

World Bee Day

The United Nations designated May 20 as **World Bee Day** to acknowledge the role of bees, and to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators, the threats they face and their contributions to ecosystems. *[This date was selected since Anton Jansa, considered the pioneer of beekeeping, was born on May 20, 1734.]*

The Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations promotes ways to show our gratitude to bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Specific examples focus on bees for World Bee Day:

Six Reasons to BEE Grateful for Bees, Butterflies, & Other Vital Pollinators

1. Bees improve our diets by providing micronutrient-rich foods.
   [Tip: Return the favor. Give bees the food they need by growing native plants in your garden.]
2. Bees give us honey.
   [Tip: Buy raw honey from local farmers and products from sustainable agricultural practices.]
3. Bees have a great work ethic – typically visiting approximately 7000 flowers a day.
   [Tip: Reward busy bees with a bee water fountain – made from a clean shallow dish of water, with rocks in it for a resting spot so bees don't drown. Make sure you always keep the dish and the water clean.]
4. Bees make our foods taste better, since well-pollinated plants produce larger, tastier fruits and vegetables.
   [Tip: Always avoid pesticides, fungicides and herbicides! These items kill pollinators, poison hives, and contaminate plants.]

5. Bees increase food production and food security.
   [Tip: Create a good habitat for bees in order to ensure pollination – grow native plants, leave bee-nesting sites untouched, and don't use pesticides.]
6. Bees maintain biodiversity. Pollination is one of nature's most important processes for biodiversity. Most of the world's flowering plants depend on pollinators for reproduction, including trees needed in forest ecosystems.
   [Tip: Learn more about bees and conquer fears about them. Raise awareness by sharing this information.]

Learn many more details from the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization at www.fao.org.
Provided by Denise Forrest

Gardening Tips

Tip #1. Seaweed and fish emulsion fertilizers add beneficial bacteria to soil for plant growth. Add 2 tablespoons of each fertilizer to a 2 gal. watering can. Fill rest with water and pour over potting mix in any container.
Tip #2. Aspirin magic. Add 2 tablets (325mg) of aspirin to a 2 gal. watering can. With aspirin solution, water the foliage of tomato plants thoroughly to control fungal diseases.
Tip #3. Epsom Salt provides magnesium and sulfur to soil. Adding 2 teaspoons of Epsom per gallon of water every 6 weeks helps peppers, eggplant, and tomatoes. Water the foliage thoroughly.
Tip #4. Whiter cauliflower. Hold leaves of plant together and lightly wrap with garden tape. Head will be whiter when harvested.
Source: California Gardening "Gardening Tips & Tricks"
Provided by Judy van Heiningen

2022 Year of the Salad Greens

Curiously, salad got its start not as a dietary staple, but as an aphrodisiac! We know this because leafy relations to modern romaine are depicted in ancient paintings as sustaining Min, the Egyptian god of fertility. Fast-forward a few thousand years and the fertility connection was still paramount in paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, including the Leda, which depicts a child holding a bouquet of lamb's lettuce (today's mâché) next to the goddess of fertility. By this point, in the 1500s, raw, leafy vegetables covered in oily, salted dressing were well established in the Roman diet as "herba salta", literally, "salted herbs," or the not- so-distant cousins of tasty greens that define the healthful salads, appetizers and mains we enjoy today.

BASIC TYPES

The **Asteraceae family** is the source of some of the best-known salad greens:
Lettuce is a mild-flavored leafy annual that is available in many types, textures, colors and shapes.
Chicories like endive and radicchio are perennial herbaceous plants that punctuate savory dishes with a bitter flavor profile.

Dandelion greens, the mortal foe of spring lawns, are surprisingly diverse culinary additions, offering unique flavor and health benefits.
The **Amaranthaceae family** includes another popular green: **Spinach** is a leafy annual that's native to central and western Asia. In the US and around the world it's harvested at many stages, from baby leaf to full size leaves.
The **Brassicaceae family** for superior flavor and cold hardiness:
Arugula, also called "rocket", is a spicy-flavored leafy annual with a strong following among greens lovers.
Kale is a nutrient-rich green, leafy, cruciferous vegetable.
Mustard Greens offer a zesty and colorful dimension to salad mixes.

For added flavor and visual appeal, think beyond the aisle of standard greens:
Asian Greens offer a wide array of shoots, leaves and **choys** that bring a unique look, flavor and dimension to salads.
Chard, better known as Swiss Chard and recognized for health benefits, is a green leafy vegetable with large leaf stalks typically prepared separately from stems.

Herbs: From basil to cilantro to watercress to dill and more, fresh herbs can always take your salads and often entire meals to the next level.

"**Tops**" are the tender greens of **beet** and **turnip**.

GARDENING TIPS

- Salad greens are all unique in terms of how they grow best, so it's well worth following the specific planting instructions as written on the package for each variety to ensure a bountiful and continuous home harvest throughout your growing season.
- Most greens prefer cool weather (50 to 75°F), so consider if that's winter, spring or fall in your area, so you can be ready to plant.
- Plant all greens in full sun. Soil that's evenly moist but not too wet yields the best greens. As a general guide, spinach, kale and mustard greens can be sown six weeks before the last frost, followed by lettuce and chard three weeks later. You can choose to transplant seedlings or sow seeds directly into the garden. Transplants can be started earlier to get a jump on the season. Leafy greens grow well in the garden and are also ideal for containers. To prepare outdoor soil, consider mixing in 1 cup of organic fertilizer for every 10' row, and ensure the soil is evenly moist. For containers, choose one that is large enough that it won't easily dry out. Fill with quality potting mix and consider mixing in peat and coir. Soil should be kept moist, not soggy. Planting depth varies by variety, so be sure to read seed package instructions. Note that some seeds, like lettuce, need light to germinate, so take care not to plant too deep.
- After germination, thin seedlings to desired spacing. If your goal is baby leaf, keep the spacing fairly dense. If you'd like to harvest whole heads, ensure spacing of 4"-8" apart within row.

This fact sheet is provided as an educational service of the National Garden Bureau.

Provided by Judy Whitehead

How to Grow Sweet Peas

NOTE

What You Will Need:

Top-quality sweet pea seed
Potting soil
Compost
Fertilizer T-posts
6-foot-tall fencing

Method: In warmer regions (Zone 7 and above) where winter weather is relatively mild, sweet peas can be sown in fall. Everywhere else, sow in late winter/early spring. Soak the seeds in water for 24 hours before sowing. This softens the seed coat and speeds up the sprouting process. While the seeds are soaking, fill your planting pots with good quality potting soil. Sweet peas produce abundant roots, so use the deepest pots you can find. Root trainers and 4-inch (10 cm) pots are ideal. Sow two seeds per pot, poking them a half-inch (1.25 cm) into the soil with your finger. Cover pots with a plastic dome lid to increase humidity and speed up germination. Place in a cool greenhouse or in a bright window in the house. Once plants are 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 cm) tall, pinch out the central growing tip, just above a leaf joint, leaving just two or three leaf nodes. This will encourage the plant to branch vigorously from the base. Sweet peas are heavy feeders and require a little extra pampering to produce abundantly.

Prepare planting beds by applying bone meal, a thick layer of compost or well-rotted manure, and a generous dose of natural fertilizer. Mix these ingredients deeply into the soil. Vines grow rapidly and require a strong structure to climb. Place tall posts roughly 8 feet (2.4 m) apart down the row and attach either Hortonova netting or 6-foot-tall (1.8 m) metal fencing for them to scramble up. Plant seedlings outside around the last spring frost in two rows, one on each side of the trellis, roughly 8 inches (20 cm)

apart down the row. As the vines explode into lush growth, it's important to keep them tied to their trellises. Once the vines get going, sweet peas can grow more than a foot (30.5 cm) a week.

Sweet peas love water, and without consistent moisture they'll fail to thrive. Keeping their thirst quenched during warm weather is crucial, so set up soaker hoses as soon as you plant them to keep their lush growth unchecked. Feed plants weekly with diluted fish and seaweed emulsion.

For the longest vase life, pick when there are at least two unopened flowers at the tip of a stem. Add flower food to the water to extend vase life.

Note: Sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*) are **NOT** edible. They are **poisonous** - especially the flowers and seeds. Grow these plants as ornamental flowers. There are annual species (*Lathyrus odoratus*) and perennial species (*Lathyrus latifolius)*.

Source: Floret's Favorite Specialty Seed Sources, Mt. Vernon, WA
Provided by Judy Whitehead

Seeds Ordered from Serbia


My grandmother, an immigrant from Eastern Europe, grew what she called field lettuce in the back garden of their house in New Britain, CT when I was a child. This was my first memory of this lettuce. Eventually I saved seeds and grew the plants for a number of years myself. When I moved to Madison some 20 years ago, the packets of seeds were unfortunately lost.

Over the last few years, I tried to find the seeds online going by only a visual memory of how the

lettuce looked. I tried mache, looseleaf, gourmet blend, mesclun, purslane and other varieties of greens, but could not find what I wanted. But this led me to search further online until I found what is called 'corn salad' from a supplier in Serbia.

oroseed@gmail.com **OroSeeds/O.R.O Tihomira Djordjevica BB,18220 Aleksinac, Serbia**
The website is sophisticated, wonderful, interactive and in English with prices listed in US dollars. "We are small hobby producers (of 3 people) who grow, trade, and buy seeds, plants, and bulbs. We are not a large and commercial company that distributes bulk seed and commercial seed. We have a small number of items and they tend to sell out quickly and are unavailable for the next growing season. We try to find as many rare and endangered varieties as possible, and to grow, trade and sell them. Since buying and growing rare varieties are expensive, we also sell some commercial varieties to cover costs. We are a company that is registered and operates according to the law. Although we grow our plants on the principle of organic production, we do not have a certificate because it is quite expensive and unprofitable for us because we are small-hobby producers. We send seeds we produce in ordinary zip bags, paper bags, or in the original packaging if it is a commercial type that we do not produce. Our shipments do not contain an invoice, this shipping method ensures that the shipment arrives safely and at no additional cost from your customs. "

The lettuce I was looking for was not lettuce at all. (***Valerianella locusta***, called common corn salad, is a small, herbaceous, annual flowering plant in the honeysuckle family Caprifoliaceae. It is native to Europe, western Asia and north Africa, where it is eaten as a leaf vegetable. Corn salad was originally foraged by European peasants and the common name 'corn salad' refers to the fact that it often grows as a weed in cornfields).

Happily, I ordered 2 corn salad packets and 2 packets of other unusual plant seeds. In about a month, a 4x6" brown paper envelope arrived by registered mail with 2 customs declarations (Serbian and French, ink stamped 5 times and signed 3 times by 2 people). All this for an amazing price of $10.25 and it met USDA license requirements also. I am comfortable ordering seeds, but have never ordered plants from outside USA. See USDA information about importation of plants and seeds. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Small Lots of Seed Last Modified: Nov 30, 2021. Lots of seed may be imported without a phytosanitary certificate under the following conditions: see USDA website for conditions met by ORO.

This pretty plant with light purple flowers and yellow centers is endemic to Serbia. It has a special talent for being able to "come back to life"; even when completely dehydrated for some time, it will return to life when watered. Of 270,000 recorded flowering plants in the world, only about 30 have this ability, and only three can be found on the European continent, of which Ramonda Serbica is one.

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Attracting Butterflies

Brightly colored butterflies can be a welcome addition to your wildlife garden, not only because of their beauty, but also because of their usefulness in pollinating flowers.

Attracting butterflies involves incorporating plants that serve the needs of all life stages of the butterfly. The insects need places to lay eggs, food plants for their larvae (caterpillars), places to form chrysalides and nectar sources for adults.

National Wildlife Federation Website

Butterfly Garden Necessities

- **Plant native flowering plants -** Because many butterflies and native flowering plants have co-evolved over time and depend on each other for survival and reproduction, it is particularly important to install native flowering plants local to your geographic area. Native plants provide butterflies with the nectar or foliage they need as adults and caterpillars. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has lists of recommended native plants by region and state.
- **Plant type and color is important -** Adult butterflies are attracted to red, yellow, orange, pink and purple blossoms that are flat-topped or clustered and have short flower tubes.
- **Plant good nectar sources in the sun -** Your key butterfly nectar source plants should receive full sun from mid-morning to mid-afternoon. Butterfly adults generally feed only in the sun. If sun is limited in your landscape, try adding butterfly nectar sources to the vegetable garden.
- **Plant for continuous bloom -** Butterflies need nectar throughout the adult phase of their life span. Try to plant so that when one plant stops blooming, another begins.
- **Say no to insecticides -** Insecticides such as malathion, Sevin, and diazinon are marketed to kill insects. Don't use these materials in or near the butterfly garden or better, anywhere on your property. Even "benign" insecticides, such as *Bacillus thuringiensis*, are lethal to butterflies (while caterpillars).
- **Feed butterfly caterpillars -** If you don't "grow" caterpillars, there will be no adults. Bringing caterpillar foods into your garden can greatly increase your chances of attracting unusual and uncommon butterflies, while giving you yet another reason to plant an increasing variety of native plants. In many cases, caterpillars of a species feed on only a very limited variety of plants. Most butterfly caterpillars never cause the leaf damage we associate with some moth caterpillars such as bagworms, tent caterpillars, or gypsy moths.
- **Provide a place for butterflies to rest -** Butterflies need sun for orientation and to warm their wings for flight. Place flat stones in your garden to provide space for butterflies to rest and bask in the sun.
- **Give them a place for puddling -** Butterflies often congregate on wet sand and mud to partake in "puddling," drinking water and extracting minerals from damp puddles. Place coarse sand in a shallow pan and then insert the pan in the soil of your habitat. Make sure to keep the sand moist.

Common Butterflies and the Plants Their Caterpillars Eat

- **Acmon Blue** - buckwheat, lupines, milkvetch
- **American Painted Lady** - cudweed, everlast
- **Baird's Swallowtail** - dragon sagebrush
- **Black Swallowtail** - parsley, dill, fennel, common rue
- **Coral Hairstreak** - wild black cherry, American and chickasaw plum, black chokeberry
- **Dun Skipper** - sedges, grasses including purpletop
- **Eastern Tiger Swallowtail** - wild black cherry, ash, tulip tree, willow, sweetbay, basswood

- **Giant Swallowtail** - prickly ash, citrus, common rue, hoptree, gas plant, torchwood
- **Gray Comma** - gooseberry, azalea, elm
- **Great Purple Hairstreak** - mistletoe
- **Gulf Fritillary** - maypops, other passion vines
- **Henry's Elfin** - redbud, dahoon and yaupon hollies, maple-leaved viburnum, blueberries
- **Monarch** - milkweeds
- **Painted Lady** (Cosmopolite) - thistles, mallows, nievitas, yellow fiddleneck
- **Pygmy Blue** - saltbush, lamb's quarters, pigweed
- **Red Admiral/White Admiral** - wild cherries, black oaks, aspens, yellow and black birch
- **Silver-Spotted Skipper** - locusts, wisteria, other legumes
- **Spicebush Swallowtail** - sassafras, spicebush
- **Sulphurs** - clover, peas, vetch, alfalfa, asters
- **Variegated Fritillary** - passion flower, maypop, violets, stonecrop, purslane
- **Viceroy** - willows, cottonwood, aspen
- **Western Tailed Blue** - vetches, milkvetches
- **Western Tiger Swallowtail** - willow, plum, alder, sycamore, hoptree, ash
- **Woodland Skipper** - grasses
- **Zebra Swallowtail** - pawpaw

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Growing Hellebores: The Christmas Rose and The Lenten Rose

Hellebores are about the earliest evergreen perennials to bloom and their flowers last a long time if we have a long and cool spring. Although their flower resembles a rose, they are not in the rose family, but in the buttercup family (Ranunculus.) Hellebores grow best in partial shade in rich, well-drained soil. They are not heavy feeders but should be top dressed with compost in early spring. Avoid a heavy mulch. They can be planted alone, as a groundcover with ferns, and/or as an understory plant with witch hazels or winterberry. Cut away the old evergreen leaves in early winter for a neat appearance, and the foliage will be replaced by fresh new leaves. Hellebores are poisonous. Their name in Greek means “food to kill.” They are deer and vole resistant and are not troubled by pests or diseases. They do self-sow with young plants appearing near the base of the established plant. The seedlings can be dug and transplanted. You can also propagate by digging the plant up after it blooms and dividing it into sections.

Christmas Rose (*Helleborus niger*)
The Christmas Rose is the first of the hellebores to bloom. The new buds emerge as soon as they can break through the soil, around early spring here. Their ivory-white flowers, 3 inches across with yellow stamens, face outward and generally do not rise above the leaves. Mature plants are about 15 inches tall and bear 20 stems. The blooms make good cut flowers.

Lenten Rose (*Helleborus orientalis*)

The Lenten Rose blooms in April, around Easter. It's larger than the Christmas Rose, growing about 24 inches tall with up to 30 stems. The downward-facing flowers come in a rainbow of colors and markings, from white to pink, maroon, lilac, and deep purple. The flowers are followed by unusual seed pods that can be left on the plant for ornamental interest or for producing hybrid seedlings underneath the leaves in a few years.
Source: www.Farmer's Almanac.com
Provided by Judy van Heiningen

Future Issues

If you would like to submit information for a future Horticulture Bulletin or have a topic you would like us to include in a future Bulletin, please send them to **SUE KELLEY at kelleys4@gmail.com.**

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