

This is the Horticulture Committee's eighth Quarterly Bulletin. It's hard to believe it's been 2 full years! We are making the Bulletin shorter and we are dropping the Perennial Garden Maintenance and Planting Section. This guidance can be accessed on the Garden Club of Madison website in each season's previous editions. A directory to find articles will also be available.

Connecticut's Historic Gardens Day 2022

Sunday, June 26 12 - 4 pm

There are 15 historic gardens throughout the state that joined together to form **Connecticut's Historic Gardens**. Once a year, events are held and admission is free. Visitors can explore a variety of garden styles from different time periods. Here is a brief overview of special offerings:

Bellamy-Ferriday House & Garden (Bethlehem)

No charge for the grounds, parterre, outbuildings and old orchard. See heirloom roses, specimen trees, peonies, and more. (House tours are \$12.)

Butler-McCook House & Garden (Hartford)

Staff offer free tours of the garden. Main Street History Center and Aetna Gallery also are free. (House tours require advance registration.)

Florence Griswold Museum (Old Lyme)

Free access to the gardens. The museum's "Garden Gang" will be dressed in vintage attire and will answer questions, plus hand out tussie-mussies.

Glebe House Museum & Gertrude Jekyll Garden (Woodbury)

Museum main floor open house and free garden tours.

Harkness Memorial State Park (Waterford)

Tours of the mansion and gardens provided 10am - 2pm.

Harriet Beecher Stowe Center (Hartford)

Free access to the Victorian cottage-style gardens and grounds. (Guided tours of the house are regular admission.)

Hill-Stead Museum (Farmington)

Several free garden programs: Garden volunteers will answer questions about the Sunken Garden and Pollinator Garden 10am - 4pm; Talks about plantings and landscaping at 1pm, 2pm, 3pm. (Tours of the house are regular admission.)

Osborne Homestead Museum & Kellogg Environmental Center (Derby)

Free self-guided tours of the museum and gardens.

Phelps-Hatheway House & Garden (Suffield)

Free open gardens.

Promisek at Three Rivers Farm (Bridgewater)

Free tours and music performed outdoors. Trails can be explored at your leisure.

Roseland Cottage (Woodstock)

View gardens and listen to discussions about the formal parterre, the history, and the theory behind the garden layout and design.

Stanley-Whitman House (Farmington)

Free tours of the house and gardens, including the dooryard garden, hops and dye garden, and early settler's garden. Demonstrations of herbal concoctions. (Reservations required.)

Thankful Arnold House Museum (Haddam)

Learn about early 19th Century herbs, vegetables, and plants. Activities for adults and kids – make a small grapevine wreath or paint a small birdhouse.

Webb-Dean-Stevens Museum [Wethersfield]

Free tours of the Colonial Revival gardens and grounds. (Discounted admission to the museum's house.)

Weir Farm National Historic Park [Wilton]

Free outdoor talks about the Sunken Garden, Secret Garden, garden history and preservation. Free activities include planting seeds to take home and creating paintings out in the landscape (supplies provided). A great chance to explore this national park!

Enjoy a full day visiting these state treasures.

To learn more information, go to www.cthistoricgardens.org.

Provided by Denise Forrest

The Great Sunflower Project

Begun in 2008, **The Great Sunflower Project** was created to address issues about pollinator populations in varying habitats. This largest citizen science project focused on pollinators has more than 100,000 members. People all over the country collect data on pollinators in their yards, gardens, parks, schools, and green spaces – in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Native bee and honey bee populations are in trouble – drastic declines result from habitat loss, climate shifts, and use of neonicotinoid pesticides and fungicides. Different bees carry pollen in different ways. Certain plants provide better nutrition. Your participation can provide valuable information.

There are 3 ways to participate:

The Great Sunflower Project Program

Plant organic Lemon Queen Sunflower seeds (Renee's Garden Seed company partners with this project). Sunflowers are easy to grow, and produce a lot of nectar and pollen which attract bees. Wild sunflowers require visits by bees to set seed. Register at the website and submit pollinator counts.

Pollinator-Friendly Plants & Places Program

Help identify critical plants that support pollinators and the regions where they thrive. Contribute to a count from your yard, favorite park or wild area. Register and submit your 2022 counts.

The Great Pollinator Habitat Challenge

Learn to evaluate and improve habitats for pollinators. See the website for great information. Details about how to register, how to count and track your data, the science behind the project, and other online resources can be found at www.greatsunflower.org

Their website also has other terrific information, including:

“Bee Identification Cards”

“Bee Natural History Cards” and flashcards

“Is it a bee, fly, or wasp?”

Pollinator plants

Data and brand names of products containing neonicotinoids

Teaching resources

Provided by Denise Forrest

Spectacular Video of Pollinators

Watch this gorgeous 7-minute video that filmmaker Louie Schwartzberg presented as part of a Ted Talk. His verbal introduction is important and thought-provoking. Go to www.youtube.com – “The Hidden Beauty of Pollination / Louie Schwartzberg” and enjoy this up-close imagery!

Provided by Denise Forrest

2021-2022 Horticulture Challenge

Thank you to Kathy McMahon for this beautiful picture of her GCM Challenge Alliums!!!



Guidelines for Dividing Perennials



Why Should You Divide Plants?

There are good reasons why you need to divide your plants. Here are a few of them:

1. Stimulate New Growth

If your plants grow too large, they start to compete with each other for water and nutrients. Additionally, large plants have restricted airflow, which can lead to diseases that can kill your plants. When you divide plants, it decreases competition while stimulating new growth. That encourages more vigorous blooming, and your plants will experience a burst of growth. For instance, if you have an older rhubarb plant that seems to be slowing down, dividing it means you'll not only have two plants instead of one, but each plant will grow better and have a bigger harvest.

2. Control the Size of the Plant

Some plants can get out of control quickly, and you don't want one plant taking over an entire garden bed. Dividing plants keep the growth rate in check.

3. Cheaply Add More Plants to Your Garden

This is an easy and inexpensive way to add more plants to other garden beds. If you build a new bed and want to add a few plants, take a few divisions from other plants and you'll have a full bed in no time.

How to divide perennials

- Dig up the parent plant using a spade or fork.
- Gently lift the plant out of the ground and remove any loose dirt around the roots.
- Separate the plant into smaller divisions by any of these methods:
 - Gently pull or tease the roots apart with your hands;
 - Cut them with a sharp knife or spade;
 - Or put two forks in the center of the clump, back to back, and pull the forks apart.
- Each division should have three to five vigorous shoots and a healthy supply of roots.
- Keep these divisions shaded and moist until they are replanted.

When to divide

Divide when the plant is not flowering so it can focus all of its energy on regenerating root and leaf tissue.

Divide fall blooming perennials in the spring because:

- New growth is emerging and it is easier to see what you are doing.
- Smaller leaves and shoots will not suffer as much damage as full-grown leaves and stems.

- Plants have stored up energy in their roots that will aid in their recovery.
- Rain showers that generally come along with the early season are helpful.
- Plants divided in spring have the entire growing season to recover before winter.

Divide spring and summer blooming perennials in the fall:

- It's easier to identify which plants need dividing.
- Perennials with fleshy roots such as peonies (*Paeonia spp.*), Oriental poppy (*Papaver orientale*) and Siberian iris (*Iris siberica*) are best divided in the fall.
- When dividing plants in the fall, allow a minimum of six weeks before the ground freezes for the plant's roots to become established. This is particularly important in colder, northern climates.

Tips for a Successful Plant Division

If you want your new and existing plants to succeed, there are a few things you should keep in mind. The best day to divide plants is on a cloudy, overcast day. If you divide plants on a hot, sunny day, that can cause the plants to dry out too fast. Ideally, pick a day when you know that the forecast predicts several days of upcoming rain showers. Transplants need a lot of moisture to help establish themselves in the garden. Water the soil the day before you decide to divide plants. It makes working with the plant and transplanting the new ones a lot easier. Don't leave the roots exposed any longer than necessary. The sun and wind dry them out quickly. Transplant into their new locations right away, and put the original parent plant back into the ground immediately. If you remove a good deal of plants from the garden, you should replenish the bed with compost and new dirt. The plants won't have enough nutrients without fertile soil to assist in the process.

Source: Julie Weisenhorn, Extension educator; and Molly Furgeson, Univ. of Minn. Ext.

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Yogurt for the Garden

If you've found a shiny, new hardscaping element that fits your garden beautifully—but you'd like to make it look like it's been in the garden for years—try yogurt! Using a blender, mix one cup of plain yogurt with pieces of moss for about 30 seconds. Pour into a container, grab a paintbrush, and paint the yogurt/moss mixture onto walls, stones, statues...wherever you'd like to add an "aged" feel. Soon, you'll notice a mossy covering creeping over your garden addition.

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Coleus – Adding Color to Your Garden

Grown for its foliage, Coleus is one of the easiest and most diverse foliage in and out of the garden. Coleus can be used in garden beds, containers, and patio pots and then brought indoors for winter color. Coleus are quite tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions. They enjoy the heat (below 95 degrees F) and languish below 55 degrees F. Cold, overly damp soils can result in leaf drop and encourage disease. Plant coleus after any danger of frost has passed when soil temperatures have warmed sufficiently and evening temperatures are above 60 degrees F. Avoid too wet or too dry conditions and the extremes of a significantly low (or high) pH. Light fertilization is recommended. Since Coleus plants are primarily used for their foliage, it is recommended they are pinched back every few weeks to prevent flower formation. This directs the plant's energy into additional branching and foliage creation instead of flowering, thereby creating a fuller plant. Coleus left to flower may lose vigor as the plant puts energy into seed production. When pinching off flowers, do so throughout the entire summer

to create a full, lush plant. Pinch just above a set of leaves or branching junction for the best appearance (don't leave a stub!).

But wait, bees love Coleus Flowers! "Blooming coleus may be thought of as unsightly, but not to a bee. A member of the mint family, these small blooms are very attractive to bees," mentions Michigan State Extension in a recent post titled [Gardening for pollinators: Smart plants to support pollinators](#). Many newer varieties do not start flowering until later in the season, so removing the flowers becomes less of an issue. Pinching and trimming the foliage is still recommended to keep the desired form.

Article From National Garden Bureau (July 2017)

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Growing and Using Herbs

Thyme

Thyme is a perennial hardy to Zone 4. It can be grown from seed in a flat kept at about 55 degrees F. Germination takes three to four weeks. The first year plants will be small and not flower, growing more robust and flowering the second year. Thyme needs good drainage for its deep roots. Plants should be set 12 inches apart and should be hardened off before planting in the garden after a week or more of several hours of sunlight and then returned to shade before evening. Divide established plants in the spring. Fall transplanting can invite winterkill. Dry thyme by hanging bunches in a warm place out of direct sunlight. Thyme is frequently used fresh or dried in soups, stews, and sauces. Fresh thyme added to rice is a flavorful treat. Lemon-scented thymes are good for tea and potpourri.

Oregano

(*Origanum vulgare*) and its cultivars are the most familiar forms of oregano. This is a perennial hardy to Zone 5 and blooms with rose, purple or white flowers. As such, it makes a good ground cover coming back each season to deliver fresh herbs for the culinary gardener. Oregano is the aromatic star in a wide variety of Greek and Italian dishes including sprinkling it on salads and pizzas. The taste is zesty and earthy somewhat like that of thyme. When shopping for seed or plants, know that there are two basic types of oregano: Italian and Greek but now there are also several forms of ornamental oregano. To start from seed, use basic seed sowing techniques for germinating in a seed starting mix. Or sow on a bed of well-soaked sphagnum moss. Cover with a sheet of glass, and place in the dark at 60 to 65 degrees F. Germination will occur after about five days. After germination, water with a weak fertilizer to spur growth. After a month, transplant to pots, growing cells or seeding flats of potting soil. After all danger of frost is over, harden the seedlings for a week by putting them in full sun for several hours each day and then returning them to the shade before night. Transplant to the garden in full sun. Alternatively, cuttings can be taken from existing plants and rooted in well-drained soil. Pinch to trim oregano plants to encourage bushier growth. Oregano is fantastic used fresh from the garden but is frequently dried. To dry, cut the stems to the base just as the plants come into flower. Place tips down in a paper bag. Tie the bag around the stems and hang in a warm place. Check for dryness after two or three weeks by rubbing the bag between your hands. If you hear leaves falling to the bottom of the bag, it is ready to be opened. Strip the leaves off the stems and finish drying in a 100-degree oven, checking frequently. Let cool, and then run the leaves through a coarse screen before bottling. If saving whole leaves, be sure to remove any bits of stem.

Chives

Chives can be harvested fresh for use in salads and recipes. Cut a few leaves to the base, but don't shear the whole plant down to the base or they won't be able to manufacture food for the roots. The flower heads can be used to make chive vinegar and the flowers can also be dried. To dry the flowers, put them

in a paper bag, but leave the mouth of the bag open. Don't tie the stems together or they may rot instead of dry. Chives can be dried by snipping the leaves as you would for a salad, and then placing them on a fine screen or nylon mesh in a warm place, out of direct light. Stir regularly for several days. When dry, seal in jars. Leaves can also be frozen in airtight bags. Chives have the ability to "cut and come again" so trim back plants to 1 to 2 inches above the ground with a clean knife or scissors. They will regrow from the base of the plant for fresh chives all season long.

Source: National Garden Bureau

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Chive Blossom Vinegar

1 1/2 cups Champagne or white wine vinegar

2 1/2 cups chive blossoms snipped right beneath the head



Heat the vinegar in a small saucepan over low heat until just warm. Keep an eye out so that it doesn't boil; you want the warmth of the vinegar to seduce the coy, subtle flavor out of the blossoms, not immolate them. Meanwhile, plunge the flowers in a bowl of cold water and gentle swish them around to flush out any dirt and bugs that have taken up residence. Dump the flowers into a colander and thwack it against the side of the sink to shake off the excess water. Stuff a pint jar with the blooms. Pour enough of the warm vinegar into the jar just to submerge the blossoms, using a metal spoon to push down any errant blooms that want to float up over the top. You might not need all of the vinegar. Let the vinegar cool, then place a square of parchment paper over the opening of the jar and screw on the top. You want to make sure the vinegar doesn't come in contact with the metal lid, as the acid will erode the finish of the cap and do nasty things to the taste of your infused vinegar. Place the container in a dark, cool spot that's so hidden you'll forget about it. This infusion benefits from a long steep—1 to 2 weeks minimum. Trust me, the vinegar will bless you abundantly for your patience—or your forgetfulness. When you're happy with the chive-y strength of the brew, strain it through a fine sieve and toss the spent blossoms. Pour the vinegar into your favorite (preferably glass) sterilized bottle with a rubber stopper and display prominently. Its hue—the blush of a very embarrassed Rosé—is a great conversation starter.

Source: *"Leite's Culinaria"*

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Published by GCM Horticulture Committee: Sue Kelley (Chair), Catherine Ferguson, Denise Forrest, Marleen Pacelli, Judith Tosiello, Judy Van Heiningen and Judy Whitehead. The Horticulture Committee welcomes two new members: Donna Lenkeit and Jane Ketterer.