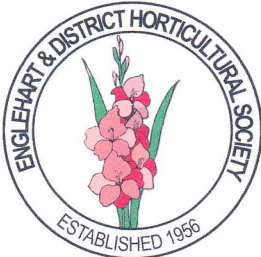




'Through The Garden Gate'

The monthly newsletter of the Englehart and District Horticultural Society
August 2020



**Englehart and District
Horticultural Society was
formed in 1956.**

General meetings:

3rd Wednesday of most months
at 7:00 p.m. in the
St. Paul's Emmanuel
Community Church

- *Speakers, workshops,
demonstrations
- *Civic Improvement
- *Youth Involvement
- *Displays and Competitions
- *Environmental Stewardship

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Harvesting Homemade Bird Food Mix:

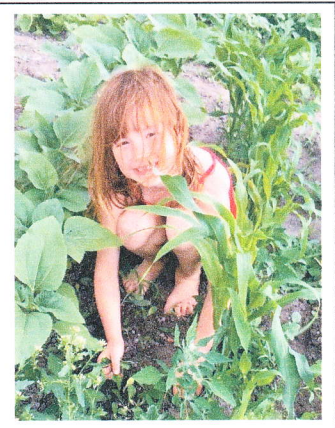
In May we learned about using seeds from your own gardens to feed birds. Now it's time to start thinking of harvesting those seeds. Harvesting seeds from birdseed plants is easy, but timing is all-important. The key is to harvest seeds when they're ripe, but before the birds can gobble them up. Cut wilted flowers from the plant as soon as the blooms turn brown and seeds appear, or when the seeds are slightly green. Toss the blooms in a paper sack. Set it aside and shake it every day for a couple of weeks, or until the seeds are completely dry. Give the sack a final shake to separate the seeds from the blooms. Store the seeds in a paper sack or a lidded glass jar. Don't worry about stems or petals mixed with the seeds; birds won't mind. When ready, you can combine the seeds and put the homemade bird food mix out in your feeders or include them in peanut butter treats or suet mixes. Melt about a cup of vegetable shortening or lard and mix with a cup of crunchy peanut butter, 2-3 cups of cornmeal and your homemade birdseed. You can add in some fruit, too. Put into a mould and freeze until firm.

Save Yourself Some Time: It really isn't necessary to harvest seeds at all... just leave the plants in the garden in fall, and the birds will help themselves to the buffet. Wait and tidy up the garden in spring. Similarly, you can save yourself a lot of time by not removing sunflower seeds from the seed head. Cut wilted blooms from the plants and leave them in strategic places around your garden. I've seen large sunflower heads hung from tree branches for the birds to snack on. Birds are well-equipped for picking seeds from the blooms. (from Gardening Know How)

Gardening With Children (cont. from July)

Scientific and mathematical concepts are easily learned through gardening. When kids plant their first seeds they become curious about what will happen next. They start making daily observations, measuring, predicting growth, etc., as their gardens grow. They begin to understand the importance of sunlight and water on living things, they begin to estimate and measure growth. They develop comparison and identification skills. Growing their own garden can also teach children the importance of environmental stewardship ... as children see their plants being eaten by pests, they may learn environmentally friendly activities they can use to help their gardens grow. They learn the importance of clean and easily accessible water sources, the effect of sunlight and rainfall on living things. All in all, encouraging children to garden is a win-win situation for everyone.

(Sorry- I am unable to give proper attribution to the author of this article.)



Genius Uses for Old Garden Hoses (from 'Best Plants')

If you visit a serious gardener, you'll most likely discover old hoses lying around or find pieces and parts used in some creative ways. Below you'll find some clever ways old garden hoses can "live on" and remain useful long after they are used to water reliably.

1. **Protect Young or Newly Planted Trees** – To cushion and prevent support wires from damaging or cutting into branches and trunks, cut a piece of hose and thread the support wire or rope through the hose before attaching to support stakes or to use the hose instead of rope or twine. Rubber hose is flexible and gives when the wind blows and not cut into the sapling's tender trunk while holding it upright.
2. **Landscaping Tool** – Perfect for laying out a flower and landscape beds. Hoses can easily be curved and moved around to give you a visual layout and borders before digging and planting.
3. **Bucket Handle Grips** – Split a section of old hose and slip it over the wire bail of a bucket... makes carrying the full bucket easier and cushion your hand.
4. **Earwig Trap** – Earwigs love cramped, small, dark places. To attract them, place 6-inch pieces of hose in your garden. Shake them into a bucket of soapy water. (I'm trying this one tomorrow!)

Going Green

Organic Fertiliser: Did you know you can make your own organic fertiliser? You can use a mulch to retain water in the soil, to protect plant roots from heat and coldness, and to keep weeds down. However, mulch can also contribute fertiliser to your garden without the carbon signature of chemical products. Some good compost mulches are chicken manure and mushroom compost. The nutrients and vegetative matter in the mulch help enrich the soil and build stronger plants. (Just remember –if manure of any kind is used in a garden, it is essential that it be aged. Fresh manure will burn plants.) Next, put those grass clippings to work the next time you mow your lawn. You can put fresh grass clippings in a large bucket and cover with water. You'll need to let this sit for about five days, then dilute the 'fertiliser tea' by adding 10 cups of fresh water to one cup of tea and pour on soil. The grass clippings help to add nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorous back into the soil. Finally- banana skins contain calcium, phosphorous, and potassium. You can just bury banana peels in the soil at the base of your plants and allow them to decompose. You can also freeze your overripe bananas (if you aren't planning to bake with them, that is) and then bury those next to your plants. You can also make a spray by soaking banana peels in water for three days and then spraying your plants or seedlings to add the needed nutrients. This is also a great recipe for houseplants. (I'm lazy... if I'm eating a banana outside, I usually toss my peel right into the closest garden.) A green garden fits into the surrounding ecosystem naturally, causes as little damage to the environment as possible, and helps promote wildlife use. A green garden can be as beautiful as one dedicated to unusual exotics but can cost less to maintain. If you're interested in contributing to fresher air, controlling the heat in the environment, and having your favorite squirrel or goldfinch stop by, consider some green gardening practices in your garden such as the following...

A Hedgerow: A hedgerow is a natural border created by planting a mixture of wildlife friendly shrubs, trees and sometimes vines. A hedgerow is considered to be 'green' because it provides a good mixture of food in the seeds and flowers of the plant. Safety from predators is also provided by the limbs and cover from the weather by the leaves. It can also be a beautiful, seasonal display of color and flowers and helps contribute oxygen into the atmosphere while absorbing carbon dioxide. Include evergreens such as pine with seeds at equal spaced intervals, fruit bearing and flowering shrubs and trees such as viburnum, currant, lilac, osier dogwood, and especially any native plants. (Hedgerows in Europe seem to be alive with birds, insects, and small mammals year round. EF) . To be continued

Strange Times

This has been a very strange few months for all of us. When I first heard about something called 'a coronavirus', I had no idea how it was going to affect our lives. I had no concept of how it could turn our lives upside down. I have felt cut off from the rest of the world and sometimes I felt like I'm on the outside, looking in. I miss my horticultural friends. I miss our meetings and get-togethers, even the working ones. I miss our speakers and presentations. I especially miss the social aspect of our group ... the sitting together after a meeting, the casual gardening talk, the making plans for meetings. I especially missed the Plant and Bake Sale! What have you missed? Friends? Shopping? Trips and holidays? Family get-togethers? We know that life for us will eventually return to normal, hopefully with all of us being alive and healthy but I think we will carry the memories of Covid 19 with us for a long time. This has been a hard time for many, cut off from friends and our usual routines. I think I may come to appreciate what I have more than ever before....my family, friends, and, of course, my gardens.

Top Heat Tolerant Plants

Are your gardens looking a bit tired in the heat of July and August? Does the blazing sun have you worked up into a sweat? Next year, why not cool off with these fuss-free heat-tolerant plants, tough enough to handle whatever Mother Nature dishes out?

Gaillardia (Blanketflower): The brilliant hues of the native North American blanket flower have a place in any garden. This all-summer bloomer has red and yellow petals with gold, red or purple centers. Blanket flower thrives in full sun and well-drained soil, and is usually grown as an annual or short-lived perennial in our area.

Celosia (Cockscomb): These fiery annual favourites thrive in hot weather. Available in shades of red, orange and yellow, celosia blooms from summer into fall. The crested type resembles a rooster's comb, which explains the flower's other name, cockscomb. Plumed varieties unfurl feathery, upright flowers; pinch back the tips to encourage branching for a showier display. Celosia can thrive in a wide range of soils, including heavy clay. (that's good for many of us here in the Little Clay Belt!)

Coreopsis: New orange, bright-red and pink varieties add a color twist to the beloved yellow original. The plants range from 20 to 120 cm in height. Keep soil moist around newly planted coreopsis, but don't overwater.

Cosmos: Suited for full sun to light shade, cosmos comes in a broad spectrum of warm and cool tones, making it a good choice for just about any location. Some cultivars, like Sea Shells, have tube-shaped petals. There is a wide range of sizes available in this pretty annual.

Scaevola aemula (Fanflower): This pretty annual has dense foliage and loads of small, fan-shaped flowers in purple, blue or white. It performs best in well-drained soil, has a trailing habit, and can spread out to almost 1 metre.

Tithonia rotundifolia (Mexican Sunflower): This fast-growing annual, which blooms in late summer and autumn, can reach 2 metres in height. Its long lasting orange and red flowers glow in full sun. For smaller spaces, there's a dwarf variety, Fiesta Del Sol, which grows to just 1 m tall.

Penstemon pinifolius (Pine-Leaf Penstemon): This plant's pointed leaves make it resemble a coniferous evergreen. The narrow, tubular flowers, often in shades of red, yellow, or magenta, entice bees and butterflies. In addition to not minding the heat, pine-leaf penstemon is also drought-tolerant. (This one is pushing our zone limit but worth trying in a protected place.)

Portulaca: Charming annual flowers grace low, spreading stems of fleshy foliage. Hot, sunny, dry conditions suit this bright bloomer just fine. Show this pretty annual off in containers, rock gardens, or mixed plantings. (*Information from Birds and Blooms*)

Plant of the Month

Tillandsia

Tillandsia are epiphytes (air plants), which are native to warm countries. They are actually members of the bromeliad family and don't need soil because water and nutrients are absorbed through the leaves. The roots are used as anchors only. Reproduction is by seeds or by offsets called "pups". A single plant could have up to a dozen pups. They love bright, indirect sunlight. There are more than 650 types and many are very easy to grow, almost thriving on neglect. They do need good air circulation and from late spring to mid-autumn should be misted daily and even soaked occasionally in lukewarm water for 30 minutes to one hour. Shake and allow it to dry some before placing it back in its home. Mist weekly during winter months. Fertilize monthly in spring and summer using a low nitrogen (first number) fertilizer at only ¼ the recommended strength.



Some Mulching Tips

Why do gardeners mulch their gardens? When do they do it and how? What do they use? I hope this article will give you some ideas and information. Many gardeners apply fresh mulch to their gardens in spring for several main reasons:

1. Mulch helps eliminate water splash and soil-borne diseases.
2. It helps suppress weed growth.
3. Mulch controls nutrient loss due to leaching in heavy rains.
4. It prevents soil from forming a heavy crust.
5. It encourages worms to work the soil at the surface, accelerating soil improvement.
6. It adds humus, creating organic matter to the top of the soil.
7. What do they use? Organic material such as fallen leaves, lawn clippings, garden waste, animal manure, straw, seaweed, mushroom compost, sawdust, chopped bracken, and more.
8. A mulch should be between 5-10 cm thick for maximum benefit. Coarse mulch will stop weeds better, fine mulch will decompose faster.
9. Before mulching, weed carefully and soak the soil.
10. Don't mix mulch into the soil- place it on top.
11. A thick layer of newspapers work as well. Nowadays, most papers use vegetable- based inks, and are non-toxic. Don't let the mulch touch the stems of your plants if possible. Only place mulch to the 'drip-line' of plants. (from *The Practical Organic Gardener...* It's a bit late for this article, but better late than never!)

Poetry and Prose

August

Lazy summer afternoons,
Walks along the beach,
Balmy evenings, cloudless skies,
Stars just out of reach,
Sailing on a quiet lake,
Hammocks in the shade...
These are the simple treasures
Of which August days are made.



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