



# 'Through The Garden Gate'

The monthly newsletter of the Englehart and District Horticultural Society  
March 2022



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

**General meetings:**

3<sup>rd</sup> 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

President: Jean. Bott  
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**Website:**

engleharthort.weebly.com

## Gardening on Clay (cont. from February)

**Watering Clay Soil:** There are some seasonal considerations to keep in mind when watering clay soil...

- 1) Because clay soil is water retentive, water within the soil could freeze up in winter and create humps that push the plants out.
- 2) During summer's hot, dry conditions, soil could turn so crusted that seedlings can't emerge into the surface and their roots couldn't burrow deeper into the soil.
- 3) In spring, clay soil takes a long time to warm up so planting schedules might be delayed.
- 4) The best time to dig or till is in autumn, when clay is at the right moisture level for handling.
- 5) Drip irrigation works best with clay soils. It allows you to deliver water at a very slow rate, giving it enough time to soak through to the root regions and drain away. In summer, a soaker hose trickling at a rate of a cup per minute could run across your garden beds for 1-3 weeks to distribute water evenly, avoiding bare spots. Make sure that your gardens have proper drainage. Consider growing your plants in raised beds if rainwater puddles and doesn't drain quickly. Continued pg. 3 )

## Mark It on Your Calendar

**March 21:** First day of spring!

**April 6:** Directors/Executive Meeting

## Starting a New Garden Hints

- ~ Place your garden in your yard where you'll see it regularly (out of sight, out of mind definitely applies).
- ~ Site it near a water source to avoid carrying pails.
- ~ Test and improve your soil.
- ~ Work the soil only when it's moist enough to form a loose ball in your fist but dry enough to fall apart when you drop it.
- ~ Use a spade or fork to gently turn the top 6-8 inches of soil, mixing in the organic matter at the same time.
- ~ Start planting: Some plants, such as pansies can tolerate cold, so you can plant them in autumn or early spring Tomatoes and most annual flowers prefer warm temperatures, until the danger of frost has passed.

## Vegetable Gardening Hints

- ~ Keep your tools sharp and clean
- ~ Prepare your soil with needed amendments
- ~ Cabbage does not like radishes.
- ~ Beans and cucumbers don't like each other.
- ~ Carrots and onions are quite friendly.
- ~ Peas don't like too much water
- ~ Potatoes do not like tomatoes/cucumbers.
- ~ Potatoes and carrots are friends.
- ~ Don't plant beans near onions or beets.
- ~ Beans love carrots.
- ~ Beets love onions, cabbage, and potatoes.
- ~ If space is a premium, consider gardening in containers.

## Tomatoes: Pruning for Maximum Yield

So you want more tomatoes? It's simple.... start pruning your tomato plants! You'll get the greatest yield when you learn how to prune the plants. In this article, we'll share tips on how to enjoy your tomato growing experience more with smart tomato plant pruning for better yields. Growing tomatoes is somewhat akin to growing bonsai. It takes quite a bit of care and attention to train your plants and manipulate fruit production. When done correctly, you will be greatly rewarded with larger fruit that actually ripens quicker. When it comes to pruning it helps to have the right tools. Keep your tools clean and sharp. The **determinate** type of tomato grows to a determined height, usually about 4' to 5' feet tall, and they do not grow any taller. You should not prune determinate tomatoes as pruning determinate tomatoes will reduce tomato production rather than increasing it. The **indeterminate** tomato grows as tall as they possibly can. If given space and trained, the indeterminate plant will just keep growing upwards endlessly. (not with our frosts!) You want to prune indeterminate tomato plants. Skilfully pruning indeterminate tomatoes will result in a healthy and abundant crop.

**Have Good Support In Place From The Start:** When you plant indeterminate tomatoes, you should begin with a method of support in place. For good tomato production, you need to stake tomato plants with high trellises, stakes, or sturdy rope to support them as they grow tall. Tomato plants firmly supported allow you to plan your pruning and to carry it out with a clear vision. As you work with staking tomatoes, you will support the main stems and trim away the auxiliary stems or tomato suckers. With your tomato plant and your support system in place, you will want to begin your plant pruning project. Be careful not to prune away main stems or excessive amounts all at once. Remember, your tomatoes need to have good leaf structure for proper photosynthesis. The main thing you want to do is trim away suckers (vegetative growth) that sprout out between the main stem and producing stems. (cont. next month)



The first sign of spring.

The last sign of both spring and optimism.

Did you plant any bulbs last fall? Every year I try to plant something in late September, early October in my gardens...daffodils, crocuses, scilla, etc. Every few years I buy tulip bulbs and plant them with my fingers crossed. If I'm lucky, I actually get a few tulip blossoms come spring. You see, I live in the country (just barely!) but it's country enough to have squirrels, chipmunks, and mice. I believe they think I plant tulip bulbs just for them to enjoy...as a snack! I have tried all sorts of tricks...never put the bulbs down on the soil as they leave a scent; smooth and pat the soil do it doesn't appear disturbed; cover the soil above the bulbs with ashes or bonemeal or something to cover the smell of the bulbs. I love tulips so much and hate losing them to those dastardly rodents! Has anybody found a foolproof way to fool those furry rats?



## *Eight Common Raised Garden Mistakes You Might Be Making*

Years ago I learned how hard it is to garden on our lovely rich clay soil. I fought it for a few years but finally gave in and Len made me two large raised beds with wood. The next year, I asked for two more. The year after, two more were built. I ended up with nine! (Since that time, as my kids grew up and moved out, we don't use all of them.) But I did learn some lessons on what worked and what to avoid through trial and error. I recently found an article which I wish I had read years ago! It offers some great hints on gardening in raised beds and thought it would be worthwhile sharing it here.

How you build and maintain your growing space can affect your success. Here's what to avoid so you can boost your backyard bounty. Planning a raised bed garden always starts with so much promise. These elevated growing spaces offer several benefits over in-ground gardens, such as easier accessibility, more control over soil composition, improved drainage, and warmer soil temperatures that allow for earlier planting and faster growing. So you eagerly draw up plans for expansive raised beds filled with fresh veggies your children will eat right from the vine, plus bold blooms you can snip for your vases. But in your enthusiasm, it's easy to make a few common raised bed mistakes that can derail your efforts. Here's what to avoid doing so you can garden smarter, not harder.

**1. Picking the Wrong Spot:** Your raised bed location should receive at least six hours of direct sun each day. If you're siting your location in early spring, be sure to consider what surrounding trees will look like come summer and where their shade will fall. Pick somewhere relatively flat, but avoid low-lying areas such as the bottom of a hill where rainwater collects. Putting raised beds up against a fence or wall means you won't be able to access all four sides easily.

**2. Forgetting about a Water Source:** The back of your yard may be a logical place to put your raised bed, but not if you have to lug buckets of water all the way. Make sure it's close enough to an outdoor faucet that a garden hose can reach. You may also want to consider installing a drip irrigation system to keep your bed consistently watered with minimal waste.

**3. Building with the Wrong Materials:** If you are planning on building a DIY raised bed, pressure-treated lumber may seem like a durable and long-lasting material to use, but many gardeners prefer to avoid it because of the risk of harmful chemicals leaching into the soil (the same goes for old tires). On the other hand, you'll also want to avoid using wood that is prone to decay or is already showing signs of wear, such as from a pallet, or you may have to rebuild in a year. Instead, opt for cedar, oak, redwood, stones, and bricks, which make excellent, long-lasting, chemical-free choices. *(Can you imagine using oak?! (We finally used tamarack for the vegie beds and a mixture for the others, including whatever we could 'scrounge'.)* (To be continued)

## *Plants For Clay Soil (cont)*

Growing plants that thrive in clay soil would ensure growing success. Here's a list of assorted plants to give you some ideas

- 1) **Trees:** Balsam Fir, Box Elder, Hawthorn, Apple, Crabapple, Willow, Oak, Aspen/Poplar, White Pine, Tamarack
- 2) **Shrubs:** Lilac, Honeysuckle, Juniper, Witch Hazel, Potentilla, Russian Olive, Burning Bush.
- 3) **Blooms:** Aster, Black-Eyed Susan, Coreopsis, Daylily, Japanese Iris.
- 4) **Ornamental Grasses:** Canadian Wild Rye, Switch Grass, Indian Grass, Fountain Grass, Prairie Cord Grass (Some information from D. Mailleux))

*Of course, there are many more plants that do well in clay soil- I have just mentioned a few. Speaking from personal experience, I can attest that clay soil is rich with nutrients but, oh my, it is very tiring!*

## *Plant of the Month*

### **Narcissus Poeticus**

The common name for this spring blooming beauty is Pheasant's Eye Daffodil or Narcissus. The bulbs should be planted in the fall to bloom the next spring. It is a late-flowering species of daffodil with pure white petals that surround a yellow, flattened cup fringed with the colour red. It is considered to be fairly easy to grow and it's a good species for naturalizing and growing in lawns. It has an intense fragrance which can be smelled throughout the garden. For best results, grow them in full sun or partial shade in moist, well-drained soil. The flowers can be deadheaded, but don't cut the foliage back until it's yellow and withered. The leaves continue to feed the bulb after the flowers are gone. It is not particularly fussy about the soil type and will grow in soils from sandy to clay.



## *Common Raised Garden Mistakes (cont.)*

Last year I began an article in the bulletin about gardening in raised beds. I have had a series of raised beds over the years and have enjoyed them for the relative ease of planting, cultivation, and harvesting. I obviously forgot to add the last part of the article in 2021 so let's start off 2022 with a finale.

**6. Selecting Oversize Plants:** When planting within the confines of a raised bed, consider the scale and mature size of what you want to plant to ensure you have enough room for some variety. For example, a single zucchini plant would take up an entire small plot. If you're tight on space, plant smaller vegetables, opt for dwarf varieties, and practice succession planting.

**7. Skipping Mulch:** Even though your garden is off the ground, it's still prone to weeds. Make sure to add a layer of mulch to help keep weeds at bay. The mulch also will help retain moisture around your plants' roots so you won't have to water as often, plus, your produce will be cleaner because mulch will prevent rain from splashing soil up onto your plants. **8. Not Protecting Your Plants:** While a raised bed may be enough to keep rabbits away, you've likely just put your precious produce at eye level for a hungry deer. Motion sensors help, as do flapping flags, as does applying ashes around larger plants/to the top of the soil.

## *Don't Forget to Renew Your Membership. !*

Just a reminder that membership money is due, (\$10.00), either with a cheque to Box 677 or by an etransfer to [nessa@ontera.net](mailto:nessa@ontera.net). If you are sending an etransfer please let Ginny know who you are and if there is any change to your information from last year. We'd miss you if you forget!

## *Poetry and Prose*

### *To Daffodils*

*Fair Daffodils, we weep to see*

*You haste away so soon;  
As yet the early-rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon.*

*Stay, stay,  
Until the hasting day  
has run*

*But to the even-song;  
And, having pray'd together,  
We will go with you along.*

*Robert Herrick*

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## Going Green

### *Better Alternatives to Salt for De-Icing*

*It's March...possibly our most unpredictable month for weather. Because of this, I thought that this might be a great time to share this interesting article I came upon. Of course, it was quite a while ago that I saved it but now can't remember where, so I am unable to give the author/publisher credit. Sorry!*

If you live up here in the Northeast, chances are that after a snowstorm, or freezing rain, you use salt to de-ice your driveway, walkway, or patio. While salt does a great job melting the snow and ice, it can be bad for your lawn, garden, concrete, pavers, pets, and car. In addition to drying out hardscapes, salt can also dry out the paws on your pet, can corrode the metal on the underside of your car, and can damage your plants if it gets into the soil. Not only that, the salt used on roadways and sidewalks gets washed into lakes, streams, and/or groundwater supplies. Instead of salt, we've listed a few alternatives that are much better for the environment and for those around you. Before you pour salt on the walkways or driveways, consider the impact it has on your plants, pets, or pavement. Think about less harmful ways to melt ice as well as ways to use less salt...

**Epsom Salt:** Epsom salt isn't as harmful to plants or vegetation as rock salt (or table salt). You may already have some on hand from the garden. It is an abrasive and melts ice slowly.

**Garden Fertilizer/Alternative Salts:** Check your garage to see if you have any fertilizer left over from gardening or try alfalfa meal, wood ashes, or coffee grounds. These abrasives will help speed melting AND improve traction, plus, they have relatively few impacts on the environment or plants. It's always a good idea to combine a de-icer with an abrasive to keep folks from slipping.

**Sand:** Sand not only absorbs sunlight, which can help snow and ice melt but it also adds traction so that your friends and family don't slip and fall.

**Kitty Litter:** Though it doesn't melt the snow and ice, kitty litter is like sand in the fact that it also adds traction for a non-slip surface. Both kitty litter and sand need to be applied on top of the snow to be effective.

**Vinegar:** Because vinegar contains citric acid, it will help melt snow and ice. It may take a few applications, however.

**Sugar Beet Juice:** Sugar beet juice is one of the most environmentally friendly ways to de-ice your home. The juice from sugar beets lowers the melting point of ice and snow. It's also completely safe for roads, pets, plants, grass, cars, and concrete.

**Alfalfa Meal:** This is another environmentally friendly way to melt snow and ice. Alfalfa meal is usually used as a fertilizer, so it's 100% natural. It's also grainy, so you'll get some traction.

**Coffee Grinds:** Like sand, coffee grinds will absorb sunlight to help melt snow and ice faster. It will also give you a non-slip surface.

**Calcium Chloride:** Calcium chloride is a less-harsh alternative to salt, and actually works better when temperatures are low (between 0 degrees and 30 degrees Fahrenheit).

**Rubbing Alcohol:** In a bucket, mix 1/2 gallon of warm water with 6 drops of dish soap and 1/4 cup of rubbing alcohol. Splash (or put in a spray bottle) around on your icy spots and watch the ice bubble up and melt away. (some excerpts from the Farmer's Almanac)

### *A Little Horticultural Humour*

**Organic or Inorganic?** Pete and Harry were talking one day. "My wife asked me to buy organic vegetables from the market garden," said Pete. "So, were you able to find some?" Harry asked. "Well when I got to the market I asked the gardener, 'These vegetables are for my wife. Have they been sprayed with any poisonous chemicals?'" "The gardener answered: 'No, you'll have to do that yourself.'" ( Sorry, hope I haven't offended anybody- I thought we needed some levity!)