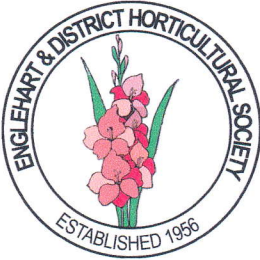




'Through The Garden Gate'

The monthly newsletter of the Englehart and District Horticultural Society
October 2021



**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
President: Jean. Bott
Bulletin Editor: E. Fisher
Website:
engleharthort.weebly.com

Caring for our 'Indoor Gardens'

During our past months of Covid time, especially during the winter months, our houseplants became even more important to our health-physical and mental. As we head back into another winter season, let's not forget our houseplants' health! As with all indoor house plants, good drainage is so important. Be sure to line the bottom of your pots and planters with pot shards or Styrofoam peanuts to provide good drainage. Use a light, well-drained potting mix for most plants. Many experts recommend specially prepared 'soil' for African violets, orchids, cactus, and bromeliads. Generally speaking, houseplants should be watered generously when the soil becomes dry or nearly dry. It pays to learn about the specific requirements of each plant in your care. For the most part, giving your plants the right amount of water, the proper light levels, and occasional feedings with a weak mixture of a balanced, water-soluble houseplant fertilizer will keep them healthy and help prevent problems with insects and fungus. Plants that aren't made to stand in water and are kept too wet tend to attract disease and pests. All of the plants that will do well in this setting have fairly high humidity requirements, so it's good to put pebble trays under your large floor planters and small pots as well. The idea is that the water will evaporate and keep the air immediately surrounding the plants properly humid. Keep the trays filled with water to provide constant humidity to your collection, but don't allow the water to touch the bottom of your planters. Mist your hanging plants daily to provide humidity. Frequent misting is a good idea for your whole collection.

Time for Some Humour

You Know You're a Gardener When...

- your hands retain furrows deep enough to plant bean seeds.
- you have to kill a certain plant at least three times in three different places before it occurs to you that maybe you should quit trying.
- your houseguests are afraid to stay in the guest bedroom because the philodendron looks hungry.
- in your will it states your final resting place will be a companion planting with your spouse in the garden.
-everything you see becomes a planter.

Why Tree Leaves Change Colour in Autumn

I remember the sense of wonder, and yet sadness at the same time, when the leaves began to change colour. I loved the sight and smell of a late summer/early fall morning but was sad that our time at the cottage was coming to an end. I remember gathering/pressing/waxing leaves nearly every fall for school projects. One thing I don't remember was learning why those green leaves of summer were suddenly changing colours. We assumed it was because of frost or old age. The following information (taken from an article in the magazine 'Horticulture' by Ed Brotak) is interesting and timely....

For deciduous trees and shrubs, the warmth and abundant sunshine of summer is the time to be productive. Leaves come out in the spring with the job of absorbing sunlight. They use the sun's energy to produce food, glucose sugar. But these leaves are relatively fragile. They could never withstand the below-freezing temperatures of winter, so the plant "knows" to shed them in the fall. (Evergreens, on the other hand, have stronger leaves, even with their own antifreeze inside, so they can withstand the winter cold.)

Fall Foliage: The green we see in leaves is chlorophyll, the pigment that absorbs sunlight. But there are other pigments in leaves, with different colours. Carotenoids are always present in plant leaves, but their colours are masked by the chlorophyll green. When chlorophyll production slows and eventually stops in autumn, the yellow, orange or brown of the carotenoids can shine through. Anthocyanin is another pigment, one that is primarily produced in the fall by only some plants. Those that have it display brilliant red and purple leaves. Pigmentation varies by species, as does the timing of the colour change, thus we can get a varying panorama of colours in the autumn.

Timing Fall's Foliage Changes: Deciduous trees and shrubs have two cues they use to stop producing chlorophyll and shed their leaves. When the days become shorter and the nights longer in fall, it's a sure sign of colder temperatures to come. This is the prime cue plants use, because it is consistent year after year. The other signal is the actual decrease in overnight temperatures. This is a secondary cue, since temperature is dependent on weather patterns that can vary. If temperatures are abnormally cold in the early fall, leaves will change sooner than normal. In a warm fall, foliage changes will be delayed, but they will still eventually occur, regardless of temperature.

Weather's Effects on Fall Colour: Just as the onset of fall colours can vary, so can the vibrancy of the colours. This is weather dependent. Prior to the fall, overall growing conditions are important. Moderate temperatures and regular rainfall are best. Heat waves and droughts stress all plants. In the fall itself, warm days and cool but above-freezing nights are best for colour. Anthocyanin production is maximized, leading to more vivid reds and purples. Warm nights not only slow the process but diminish colour. Cloudy conditions limit sunlight, lessening anthocyanin amounts and dulling colors. Drought conditions can even cause premature leaf drop, as can strong winds. Put these factors together and you'll understand how each fall can be quite different. (from an article in Horticultural Magazine)

Testing Soil's pH with Vinegar and Baking Soda

Knowing your soil's pH is important when starting a garden. Soil pH affects what kinds of plants will grow best in your soil and the availability of certain nutrients. You can test your soil's pH by sending it off to a lab or buying a test kit, but there is a more economical way to do it with items that you probably already have in your kitchen! To start, all you need is some baking soda, vinegar, and two samples of soil from your garden. First, add ½ cup of vinegar to one sample of soil. If it fizzes, you have alkaline soil. This means the pH of your soil is less acidic. If your soil doesn't fizz after adding vinegar, take the next sample of your soil and mix distilled water with it until it's muddy, then add ½ cup of baking soda. If it fizzes after adding the baking soda, you have acidic soil. If your soil doesn't react to either the baking soda or vinegar, then your soil pH is neutral. The pH of soil can decide what plants will grow well.

Succulents (cont)

Where to place succulents to get enough light:

Along with water, temperature, and soil, sunlight is another important factor for succulent growth. Most succulents need at least 3 hours of light exposure every day. It is best to place your succulents near windows and in a spot where they can receive morning sunlight and less afternoon sunlight. Afternoon sunlight is not preferred as it is stronger and more likely to leave the plant sunburned, especially during summer. Also, keep your eyes on your plants to monitor how plants adjust to their current positions in the house.

The Jaded Gardeners' Succulent Quiz: True or False?

1. Succulents get their name from their juicy stems and leaves. _____
2. Indoor succulents are pest free. _____
3. You need to have a piece of root to propagate a new succulent. _____
4. Christmas cacti are succulents.
5. Succulents must be planted in cactus soil to grow. _____
6. All cacti are succulents. All succulents are cacti. _____
7. Succulents must have 10-12 hours of good light each day. _____
8. Succulent cuttings should be left to harden before trying to root them. _____
9. Succulents should be rooted in water. _____
10. Portulaca are annual succulents which we can grow in our gardens. _____
11. Jade plants belong to the brassica family. _____
12. Hens and chicks are not succulents. _____ *(Check out the answers below)*

Southwest Injury (Frost Cracking)

During/after periods of cold winter nights followed by warm sunny days, you may discover frost cracks (Southwest injury) in trees. They can be several feet long and a few inches wide, and the colder the temperature, the wider the cracks. Frost cracks usually occur on the south to southwest side of the tree. By definition, the term "frost crack" describes vertical cracks in trees caused by alternating freezing and thawing temperatures. When the bark alternately contracts with freezing temperatures and expands on warm days, a crack is likely to occur. A tree with a crack is in no immediate danger and may live for several years.

Reasons for Southwest Injury: Fluctuating winter temps can cause frost cracks. A repeated switch from warm to freezing temperatures causes the inner layers of bark to expand then shrink over and over. Eventually, that tension causes a crack. Frost is just one of the causes of tree bark cracking. You'll also see cracking tree trunks from a condition called sunscald. In late winter or early spring, warm afternoon sun shining on the trunk can cause the tree tissue to break dormancy. When sunny afternoons are followed by freezing nights, the tissue dies. You may find strips of bark peeling off the tree. Dark-coloured and smooth-barked trees are most susceptible to sunscald. Cracking tree trunks also occur in trees grown in areas where they are marginally hardy. Hardiness zones reflect the lowest expected temperature in an area, but all areas experience unexpectedly low temperatures from time to time and these low temperatures can damage trees growing on the edges of their hardiness zones. (Denis Mailloux)

(This can be a real problem for us, especially if spring comes early, followed by a last blast of winter weather.)

Succulent Quiz Answers: 1. T 2. F 3. F 4. T 5. F 6. F 7. F 8. T 9. F 10. T 11. F 12. F

Plant of the Month

The *Epiphyllum anguliger*, more commonly known as a Fishbone cactus, is an interesting plant. It grows long, flat stems resembling fishbones. It is also known as a zig zag or rick rack cactus (although it is actually a succulent, not a true cactus). A fishbone cactus is easy to care for and requires low maintenance. You can mist your plant regularly to give it a boost, especially during hot weather. To encourage blooms, keep your plant in a cool spot of around 11-14°C or 52-57°F, perhaps under lights in the basement. Keep the potting mix on the dry side. When buds begin forming, slowly move the plant to a warmer spot, water and feed it with a fertilizer with a higher middle number (phosphorus for blooms). The fishbone cactus just naturally has a wild untamed look but you can prune your plant if you think it needs a cut. Long stems can be cut back to shorten them. New stems will usually grow right from where you cut it, making your plant grow back fuller. You can easily propagate the cut-off piece of the stem and turn it into a new plant! It is best to take stem cuttings in spring to late summer. Look for young growth for the best chance of success.



Poetry and Prose

Fall Leaves, Fall

*Fall, leaves, fall
Die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and
shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the
autumn tree.
I shall smile when
wreaths of snow
blossom where the
rose should grow;
I shall sing when
night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.
Emily Bronte
(she must have been in a very sad
frame of mind!)*

Don't Let Leaves Accumulate on Your Lawns

When leaves start to build up too much, to the point where no light is getting through, they start to harm your lawn. While perennials, shrubs, trees, bulbs, etc. tolerate and even prefer it when their roots are covered with dead tree leaves in the fall, lawn grass is not as accepting. You have to remember that turf is an artificial environment maintained only by considerable human labour. Since grass continues to photosynthesize right through the fall until the ground freezes, it's therefore important to regularly sweep up fall leaves and to keep doing so until the lawn does stop growing.

Of course, a scattering of dead leaves is not going to be particularly harmful to a lawn, but when leaves build up to the point where no light is getting through, that also means the lawn is no longer its daily dose of solar energy. A build-up of dead leaves also inhibits air circulation and that can lead to lawn diseases. When there are so many leaves you can't see the lawn, you should remove the leaves without too much delay. When leaf cover is thin, just shred the leaves into tiny pieces and leave them to fertilize the lawn. If the layer of leaves is relatively thin and patchy, though, rather than remove the leaves, why not use them to "feed" the lawn? Simply run over the lawn with a mulching mower. It will reduce the leaves to tiny pieces that will soon work their way to the ground, in between the blades of grass, thus enriching the soil. (Great advice for all of us here in Englehart and I must admit that I hate raking leaves!)

(From the Harriston Horticultural Society newsletter)

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