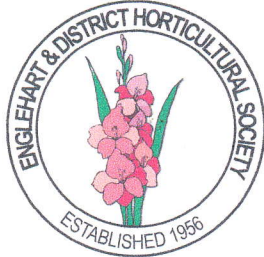




'Through The Garden Gate'

The monthly newsletter of the Englehart and District Horticultural Society
February 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

Using Eggshells as Seedling Starter Pots

In keeping with being environmentally friendly, let's try something that's not only good for our land but also can save you money and is environmentally sustainable. When you crack your eggs, take a little care to do it as neatly as possible. If you are able to retain the bottom two thirds of the shell by cracking it closer to the top, that's ideal. Rinse your empty shells and set them aside to dry. An empty egg carton with the top cut off makes an excellent drying rack. Keep your eggshells in the egg carton when you plant your flower seeds. You can also use the egg carton top as a tray to provide a little bit of strength and support. Fill the eggshells with potting soil, leaving a little bit of room at the top. Use a spray bottle to moisten the soil liberally. Poke a little hole in the soil and drop in your seed or seeds. Cover the seeds with potting soil. Spray liberally again. Place your egg carton/seed tray in a warm, sunny (or well lit) place. Mist liberally every day to keep the soil moist. As it doesn't have a drain hole, misting is better than watering. If you're very brave, you can try gently, using a sharp needle, to make a small drainage hole. When your seedlings are ready to transplant, transition them as needed and then crush the eggshells slightly and plant the entire root ball and shell. There is no need to worry that the shell will wick moisture away from your plants' roots. It will simply decompose and provide your plant with valuable calcium. (sorry- I can't find the name of the source of this article)



Some Society Changes

As we were unable to hold our regular January meeting in person, a lot of work has been done by phone and email. Being unable to have an in-person election or have reports presented, Bonnie and others spent a lot of time organising things by phone and internet. Many thanks go to our Executive and Directors for doing this. As a result, most things are going to stay the way they were last year...same Executive, same Directors, same lack of monthly meetings. However, one important change to announce...you can now pay your annual dues of \$10.00 by an e-transfer. We continue to use our website and our Facebook page to keep in touch with our members and others interested in horticulture. I hope you will spend some time looking at our website. Webmaster Rick Heaslip does a wonderful job keeping us informed about what's happening in our Society as well as offering historical posts, photographs, a list of current year's executive and directors, and more. Our Facebook page is full of horticultural advice from experienced growers, questions, personal experiences, even humour. Many of our members are using these two sources to keep in touch with like-minded people, to seek advice, to share information, to share something interesting, and much more. We are all doing our best to keep things going and to keep things positive.

Will My Seeds Germinate?

Many purchased seeds have a date stamp indicating the "sow before" date. Many seeds stay viable for years if they have been stored correctly, in a cool dry place. (I use a sealed plastic bag in the fridge). However, you may have been given some seeds with no package, so no instructions. If you're not sure if they are still viable it, is worth testing their viability before spending money on new seeds or getting frustrated by poor germination. Some plants have very specific germination needs. The best way to ensure that the seeds are still viable is to do a simple test. To test the viability, simply remove about ten seeds from the packet. Moisten a paper towel and place the seeds into it. Place the damp paper towel into a zip-lock bag. Place the plastic bag somewhere warm, about 21C or 70 F, but not in direct strong sunlight. Check daily to be sure the paper towel does not dry out. After 7-10 days, check the germination of the seed. (Some seeds will germinate earlier, while others take up to several weeks, so know your seeds.) Germination rates of at least 70% indicate a moderately viable packet of seeds. However, some seeds require very specific planting conditions. Some must be chilled in advance, some must be exposed to light, while others must germinate in full darkness. Thank goodness we now have the internet to give us advice about specific planting requirements of 'the oddballs'.

Seed Keeping Chart

Beans:	3-5 years
Beets/Chard:	2 years; older seed grows more slowly
Cabbage family:	3-7 years
Carrot:	2-3 years
Squash:	2-3 years, old seed is rarely viable
Cucumber/Melon:	6-8 years
Lettuce:	2-4 years marked decline in vigour after 2 years
Onion/Leeks	2 years, then swift decline
Parsnip:	1-2 years
Peas:	at least 4 years
Peppers:	3 years
Tomato:	3-5 years



Benefits of Compost to Your Garden

Do you use compost in your gardens? At first it might seem quite complicated but with a bit of reading and a bit of experience, it will become second nature to you. You do not have to be a pro at it and it's really hard to mess it up but certainly it helps to have some hints. I will try to do that over the next few bulletins. In the meantime, if you're wondering why people do compost, below are some thoughts...

- improves soil structure in all soils
- improves water retention in loose, sandy soils
- improves drainage in heavy, clayey soils
- prevents the soil surface from crusting, easing the emergence of seedlings
- resists compaction, making it easier for roots to penetrate the soil
- helps balance pH, making alkaline soils more acidic and acidic soils more alkaline

Going Green Peat Pots and Alternatives:

Peat pots have been a handy standby for gardeners for many, many decades. So, what are peat pots? They are biodegradable pots made from peat moss that has been combined with shredded wood pulp fibres and firmly compressed. Jiffy peat pots provide a convenient and gentle way to start seeds and seedlings because you can simply plant the entire pot when you are ready to plant your seedling.

Are Peat Pots Environmentally Friendly? Peat pots are biodegradable, so they are certainly better than plastic pots in this respect; however, are they really environmentally friendly? In fact, we are learning more and more that the gathering of peat moss for horticultural use actually has a very negative impact on the environment. The reason for this is that peat moss is not a resource that is sustainable. Like rain forests, peat bogs take hundreds of years to grow and develop. Harvesting or mining peat is a destructive process that does away with hundreds of years of growth in a very short period of time. (to be continued)

Using Grow Lights

What are grow lights? The easy answer is that grow lights act as sunlight substitutes for growing plants indoors. There are many types of grow lights and using grow lights on plants can be very simple or extremely complicated. The following may help you if you are considering buying a set of lights

Types of Grow Lights: Fluorescent Tubes: Because they are inexpensive, easy to use and readily available in a variety of sizes and shapes, fluorescent grow lights are the first choice for many home gardeners. Fluorescent lights, which provide light primarily on the blue end of the spectrum, are cool to the touch, so they are safe to use above tender seedlings. Compact fluorescent lights are great for small-space gardening. You can also use newer full-spectrum fluorescent grow lights which, because they provide light on the both ends of the spectrum, are very close to natural daylight.

LED Grow Lights: This new technology offers many benefits to indoor growers and greenhouse owners because they are compact, low-heat, lightweight and are easy to mount. LED lights may appear dim to human eyes because the bulbs don't provide a lot of yellow-green light, but they offer plenty of red and blue light that maximizes plant growth.

Incandescent Lights: Old-fashioned incandescent lights are hot and can't be placed too close to tender plants. However, some gardeners use incandescent lights, which provide light only on the red end of the spectrum, to supplement standard fluorescent tubes that provide mostly blue light. However, most indoor growers are opting for newer technology LED or fluorescent lights, which are easier to use and more energy efficient. Other types of indoor lights include metal halide lights or high pressure sodium.

Using Grow Lights on Plants: Selecting grow lights for plants requires careful consideration as plants have very different lighting requirements. For example, plants such as dracaena or ferns require lower light while African violets and similar plants thrive in low to moderate light. In general, succulents, most herbs, and many types of orchids need more intense light. Seedlings require a lot of bright light to prevent them from becoming leggy. Keep in mind that nearly all plants need at least six hours of darkness. An inexpensive timer will simplify the process. (From Gardening Know How)

Some Winter Fun ... A Sun Catcher

This is a fun activity to do with children or all by yourself. **1.** Gather some natural materials (small cones, twigs, orange slices, berries etc.). **2.** Arrange in a pie plate or plastic container **3.** Have some twine or yarn loop for a hanger. **4.** Cover everything with water and make sure the end of the string is well under water. **5.** Put in freezer or leave outside overnight in the cold. **6.** Carefully remove the ice circle from container and hang where you can watch the sun reflect on the ice to make your collection shine. If you include some bird seed and small berries, the birds will enjoy it as well. (Harriston Horticultural Society)

Plant of the Month

Gerberas

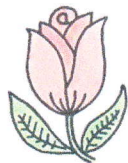
Gerbera daisies have sturdy stems that don't hollow out like other cut flowers. They also have an exceptional vase life, usually lasting up to 10 days. Gerberas come in almost every color. There are different patterns and forms of blooms on the market; some have so many layers of petals that they look like miniature sunflowers. There is variation in center eye color of the bloom with green, cream, or dark brown being most available. General care of gerbera daisies is simple, but they can be a little more needy of fertilizer than most annuals. These plants feature long stems and large foliage, which are both not ideal characteristics for a home garden. However, there is work being done on gerberas as potted plants. Many of the miniature varieties look great as a single plant in a pot or in a mixed container with other colourful annuals. You can find cut gerberas at most florists and some local greenhouse businesses have them available as houseplants. They are well worth the extra money and are fairly long lived for a potted florist flower.



Today's Language of Flowers

A humorous follow-up to last month's 'Language of Flowers ...

UPDATED THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS



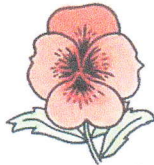
"Yes"



"No"



"Whatever"



"Your text received"



"I await your e-mail"



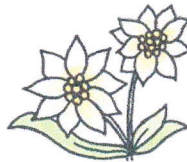
"I regret that I am emotionally unavailable"



"Your Profile pic charms me"



"I Love You .but I'm not in love with you"



"We are all hurtling towards death"

gemma CORRELL 2014

Poetry and Prose

Wintertime Beauty

*The streams and lakes are
crystal dressed,
And everywhere we look,
we're blessed .*

*The rooftops all flaunt
crowns of snow
But inside there's a
cheery glow.*

*The fireplace is warm
and bright,
The folks are cozy,
hearts are light.*

*God's wrapped the world in
wintertime with shining
beauty, peace sublime.*

B. Anderson

Published 11 times a year
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