



# 'Through The Garden Gate'

The monthly newsletter of the Englehart and District Horticultural Society  
January 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

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## Happy New Year

Happy New Year, everyone! My mother once told me that time goes more slowly when you're young and races by when you're older. I know now how right she was. It feels like just yesterday we were celebrating the Millennium! I'm sure it was just a couple of weeks ago that I was sitting here in my favourite chair, typing the January 2021 bulletin. I can't believe another year has gone by and what a year it was! I am so glad to see the back of 2021! Hopefully 2022 will be a better year for all of us. Did you make any New Year's resolutions? I once again promised myself that I would pay more attention to my house plants...and of course...lose weight! I have a feeling my plants will be the winners in the resolution race. Although I know that 2021 has come and gone, it feels like we missed it. So many of us spent most of our time in our homes, missing friends and families, missing our holiday celebrations, our get togethers with friends and neighbours, our monthly Horticultural Society meetings! I know I speak for most people when I say that I can hardly wait until we can once again meet with other members to listen to interesting speakers, learn about new horticultural trends, and, also important...to socialise and enjoy the company of other people sharing similar interests.

## Some Horticultural Humour

- \* Your lawn is always slightly bigger than your desire to mow it.
- \* Whichever garden tool you want, it's always at the back of the shed.



## Looking to the Future

I wonder how many of us are gardeners. I wonder how many of us are gardeners due to an older person introducing us to the joys of gardening. I know that I am a gardener because of the influence of my mother. I watched her on her hands and knees, planting, weeding, harvesting and I could hardly wait until I could have my own garden. I know my mother got her love of gardening from her grandfather in England. Introducing and encouraging a child to try gardening is one of the best things we can do for them. They will learn to appreciate the joys of getting dirty, the importance of work, the thrill of anticipation of a bloom opening or a tomato ripening, the glory of being one with nature, the role of weather in their lives, the disappointment of loss, and the thrill of success as they enjoy their first harvest or pick their first bouquet.

## *Invasive Plants*

I recently read an article in the Toronto Star entitled “What Can We Do about Invasive Plants?” I was surprised to see that burdock was on the list. Burdock was the bane of my life as a child. The Bradt children and I played for hours in the woods and fields around our houses and wherever we went we ended up covered in those horribly sticky burr seeds. They weren’t too bad on denim jeans, but on a woolen sweater or on socks, they were awful. So many of my clothes had pulls in them from the nasty things. However, I never thought about anything else except how bothersome they were to me. It turns out that these ‘bothersome’ plants can be deadly to birds. In 2002, bird expert, Jean Iron, wrote an article entitled ‘Kinglet Killer’, describing the terrible deaths of small birds, including kinglets, vireos, goldfinch, chickadees, nuthatches- and even small mammals, including bats, due to burrs! Dog Strangling Vine is also another deadly plant. Although it apparently does not really kill dogs, it strangles other plants which are beneficial to wildlife, including the seedlings of white pine trees and milkweed. Milkweed is essential to the survival of monarch butterflies. I don’t think we have any Dog Strangling Vine in our area yet but it will be something to watch for.

## *Fruits, Vegetables, and Their Benefits*

I recently came across an interesting little article about vegetables online. Now, I have never been a great fan of vegetables (my sister was but she hated fruit while I loved fruit and could tolerate a couple of vegies). I’ve improved with age and am more willing to eat them (trying to set a good example for my boys!) This is probably why I enjoyed the article about vegetables and their histories. I found it quite interesting and thought it might be a good idea to share some of the info here in the bulletin.

“Benefits of vegetables cannot be counted, and all of them offer to us many ways to provide sustenance, balance our metabolism, strengthen our immune system, and protect us from many illnesses. Here you can find out more about vegetables and the way they enabled incredible growth of our modern civilization. Since the dawn of modern human civilization, vegetables proved to be an important piece of our diet and medicine. Their rich nutrients, minerals and vitamins enabled our ancestors to create medical remedies for many illnesses, and the rich caloric potential of starch veggies proved to be instrumental for feeding the ever increasing population of the world.



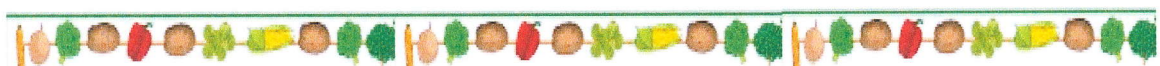
**The Carrot:** Carrots are ancient root vegetables which have managed to travel as our companion through several millennia of expansion and growth. Today, after several centuries of selective breeding, this healthy vegetable has found its place not only on the dining tables of millions of people all around the world, but also as an important medicinal remedy that can greatly reinforce our health.



**The Tomato:** The tomato is an indigenous plant of Central America that was able to quickly expand and become one of the most famous food flavourings in the world. Its nutritional and medicinal value guaranteed its expansion across continents, until it became known across the globe. It is one of the most famous fruits that we eat as a vegetable.



**The Cucumber:** The cucumber is another interesting fruit which we eat as a vegetable that has managed to infuse itself into our culture. During its long presence in our history, cooks, scientists, and doctors managed to explore all aspects of its composition, enabling people from all over the world to reap its benefits. Pickled or fresh, cucumbers are tasty!  
(to be continued)



### *The Love Apple...The Tomato*

The following article is one I found last year in a magazine or a website but I neglected to add the name of the publication. Sorry. The tomato is one of the most popular garden fruit/vegetable in. For many years, however, tomatoes were grown solely for their ornamental value. Tomatoes are usually easy to grow and a few plants provide an adequate harvest for most families. The quality of fruit picked in the garden when fully ripe far surpasses anything available on the market, even in season. Spring and fall freezes limit the outdoor growing season. Tomato plants fall into one of **two types** that affect ultimate plant height and cultural requirements. Tomatoes are **determinate** if they eventually form a flower cluster at the terminal growing point, causing the plant to stop growing in height. Plants that never set terminal flower clusters, but only lateral ones and continue indefinitely to grow taller are called **indeterminate**. Older varieties are almost all indeterminate. These can be counted upon to produce abundant foliage and to ripen flavourful fruit. They may, however be late in maturing. (This can be a problem for those of us gardening in the north.) The first determinate varieties developed had real problems with inadequate foliage cover and taste, but they ripened very early. Newer determinates produce better foliage, may grow taller and ripen fruit of similar quality to modern indeterminate varieties. They still tend to ripen their fruit over a shorter period of time, so successive plantings may be desirable with determinates to keep the harvest coming through the entire season. Determinate vines are easier to control and support during the growing season. Some of the extreme dwarf types are determinate as well as dwarf, producing some truly tiny mature plants. Days to harvest are generally determined from the time transplants are planted in the garden. *(Lots about tomatoes in this bulletin!)*

### *Using Lights on Plants*

There are many types of grow lights and using grow lights on plants can be very simple or extremely complicated. I hope the following may help if you are considering growing under 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 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 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. Most indoor growers are opting for newer technology LED or fluorescent lights, which are easier to use and more energy efficient.

**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.

### *Plant of the Month ... The Jade Plant*

The common jade plant is *Crassula argentea*, also known as *Crassula ovata*. This attractive, long-lived, succulent plant belongs to the family *Crassulaceae*. It has been a popular indoor plant for decades. Many people enjoy growing jade plants in their homes and they are said to bring good luck to their owners. Most important to remember when growing Jade plants are water, light, temperature, and fertilizer. Make sure that they are watered properly. Never let a jade plant dry out completely, but also do not water a jade plant too often as it can cause root rot. Don't water your plant on a schedule. Rather, water your jade plant when the top of soil is just dry to the touch. If your plant is losing leaves or has leaf spots, this is most commonly caused by too little water. Under ordinary growing conditions, water a jade plant in a clay pot every 10 to 14 days; in a plastic pot, every 2 to 3 weeks. As succulents, jade plants hold water in their leaves. They do not like sitting in wet or moist soil. When watering, water thoroughly and allow the excess water to drain. Check plants regularly! Grow Jade plants in a well-draining potting mix. A cactus or succulent soil is perfect. Jade plants growing in a fast-draining potting soil need water sooner than a jade growing in "heavier" soil. Do not overpot. Before you decide to plant jade plants in a new container remember they like to be a little root bound. Add plenty of drainage material at the bottom of the container. This helps drain any excess water away from the roots. These plants are durable and tough. They need plenty of bright light to grow best. A south facing window is a great location for indoor jade plants. They prefer direct sunlight. If your jade plant does not get enough light the stems will be much thinner and break off easily. Jade growing indoors in a window with bright light may do well on a 10-14 day watering schedule. Start with watering every 2-3 weeks. When light conditions change these plants will let you know they are unhappy. (A hint- I have had good luck using Styrofoam 'peanuts' rather than stones in the bottom, especially in heavy pots.)



### *Poetry and Prose*

#### *God Rest You Merry Gardeners*

*God rest you merry gardeners,  
Let nothing ye dismay,  
For Spring is soon to come again  
With lengthening of days,  
The sun will warm the soil  
once more,  
And send Jack Frost away,  
Oh, tidings of compost  
and joy,  
Compost and joy,  
Oh, tidings of compost  
and joy!*

*(Sent to me by Sheila Durrant  
(author unknown)*

### *How Do You Know You're a Gardener?*

- \*There is a decorative compost container on your kitchen counter.
- \*You would rather go to a nursery to shop than a clothing store.
- \*You prefer gardening to watching television.
- \*You plan vacation trips to arboretums and public parks.
- \*Dirt under your fingernails and calloused palms are matters of pride.

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*(As a little New Year's gift, I am including a 5<sup>th</sup> page to our January bulletin. I was lucky enough to find this article by Mark and Ben Cullen in a December Toronto Star and thought it would be a perfect time to share their experiences and knowledge with you here.)*

### *Winter Houseplant TLC*

With the shortest day of the year behind us, we turn to our interior greenescapes to lift our spirits through these dark days of winter. And while our houseplant companions cheer up our homes, they are also feeling the effects of these shorter days. Someone who understands this with particular insight and knowledge is Darryl Cheng, author of "The New Plant Parent." He's an engineer and has studied the relationship between houseplants and light. "The impact of light cannot be overstated: no special fertilizer, distilled water, or humidifiers will improve a houseplant in a poorly lit environment," says Cheng. With his assistance, we offer tips for ensuring your cherished plant companions' well-being through these short and often gloomy daylight stretches of the season:

**Light** is the big factor. Placing your tropical plants in south-facing, unobstructed windows is ideal but there is also nothing wrong with artificial light. Cheng advises, though, that many agricultural-grade grow lights are likely overkill: "Most of the tropicals people are growing as houseplants have a lower light demand than the high-yielding vegetable crops those lights are built for. If you have a regular white LED bulb, your plants will get enough spectrum at enough intensity to survive." Bear in mind this supplemental LED lighting is lower intensity than the sun, which can be compensated for with longer exposure — up to 12 hours a day won't hurt, and with the efficiency of LED lights there shouldn't be much cause for concern on your hydro bill.

**Moisture: less.** The biggest cause of houseplant failure is too much love in the form of watering. Waterlogged potting soil will lead to root rot. If your plants are looking yellow or black and wilted, check to see if the soil is too wet by pushing your finger into the soil, about 3 centimetres deep. Remove the dead foliage and repot into fresh, dry soil if necessary.

**Moisture: more.** Many of the tropical plants we enjoy in our home are native to humid, rainforest-like environments — basically, the opposite of our dry Canadian homes during winter. Orchids, Majesty Palm, Begonias, and Boston fern are some which will benefit from a misting with tepid water in a fine spray bottle, generally when the soil starts to appear dry. Keep an eye out for brown or dry leaf tips. Important note: succulents, Fiddle leaf Fig, and Spider Plants are among those which do not benefit from misting and can end up with the symptoms of overwatering when they are misted. The easiest way to think about whether to mist your houseplants is to consider where they came from: those native to the Mediterranean and Africa typically enjoy drier conditions than the lush tropical plants hailing from the rainforests of Southeast Asia and South America.

**New Year's Diet Plan.** Like many of us, the new year is a good time for indoor plants to cut back their food intake. Pay close attention: if there is new growth, continue fertilizing at a reduced rate. Growth of most common houseplants slows down in the winter, so you can hold off fertilizing completely until early spring when you notice growth picking up again. In extreme cases, fertilizing in winter can turn soils salty and burn roots. However, most often it is just a waste since the expensive fertilizer will end up flowing right through the soil. Canadian winters are hard on all of us but when we take the right steps to care for our houseplants, their uplifting greenery and blooms can help take care of us.