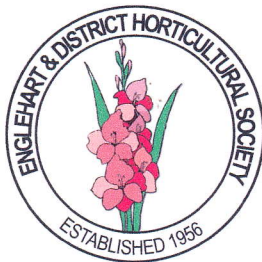




'Through The Garden Gate'

The monthly newsletter of the Englehart and District Horticultural Society
March 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

Making Your Own Insecticidal Soap

Home gardeners have long used homemade insecticidal soap for insect control and killing harmful garden bugs on plants. Over a century ago fish-oil soap was a common solution. "Natural control" of pest is not something new in today's green, eco-friendly world.

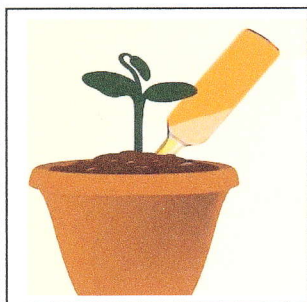
So, what is insecticidal soap? Some people believe there is a pest control secret to mixing a DIY insecticidal soap in water and spraying a plant. Somehow, this helps remove bugs from your garden. Nope! A good blast of water can wash bugs away. The secret (if one exists) is in the "soap" used to make the pest- killing soap. Use a true safer soap, like Dr. Bonner's Castile Soap and not a dish detergent or dish soap – more on recommended soaps later. The insect killer power comes from the potassium salts of fatty acids contained in the soap. The fatty acids work effectively killing soft-bodied insects like aphids, mealybugs, leaf piercing spider mites, thrips, whiteflies, and scale insects

How To Get Rid of Aphids and Whiteflies

These fatty acids dissolve or remove the garden insects cell membranes and their natural protective waxy coatings, causing death from excess water loss. Potassium salts in the soaps are the most useful in making insecticidal sprays to control plant pest. One of the most well-known potassium based insecticidal soap spray products is Safer Insecticidal Soap, which controls many plant bug pests found on houseplants, vegetables, and fruit. You can also use Neem oil for plants. Another favourite is *Diatomaceous Earth* (to be continued)

Garden Hacks

From house-hold cleaning, grocery shopping, and gardening, hacks are ways in which you can take many seemingly simple everyday items and transform them into time-saving tools. One of the most fertile grounds for hacks is the garden. If you are an avid gardener, you spend a lot of time getting your hands dirty. While there is a certain meditative quality about spending a day digging around in the dirt, there are certainly times when a time saving tip (or three or four!) would be most welcome. Gardening hacks can make your life a lot easier, increase your yield and save you time.



Tip Number 1: Set up a self-watering wine bottle planter that saves you time... if you're going holiday or are just too busy, fit a series of terra cotta stakes into a wine bottle full of water. Stick the neck of the bottle into the soil and as the terracotta stakes absorb the water, it will leak slowly over time. This waters the soil and keeps the plant's roots moist and the plant hydrated. (I must admit I haven't tried this yet but will give it a try.)



Tips for Growing Tomatoes



Tomatoes are the ultimate backyard crop, and growing them is easier than you might think. These tomato growing tips should help you to take care of your most delicious plants. Tomatoes annually rank as North America's #1 home garden crop. No vegetable (although the tomato is technically a fruit) has received more attention from plant breeders and seed savers, which gives us lots of varieties to choose from. However, you may want to read these tips on growing tomatoes to start your plants off right and avoid problems before they happen.

1 a. Choose the Right Tomato for Your Climate: There are many varieties of tomatoes. Consider these four main factors: **Climate and the length of your growing season.** If you live in a northern climate, your tomatoes may not even have time to turn red. Look for varieties that are for cool climate/short season such as "Early Girl" (matures only 50 days after planting); most other short-season varieties will be cherry tomatoes.

1b. Types of Tomato: Do you want tomatoes for pasta and sauce? Do you want a great slicer? Is it bite-sized tomatoes you're after? Romas, plum, or 'paste' tomatoes are excellent for cooking because they contain plenty of flesh for sauces. Beefsteaks are chunky and juicy so great in salads and on a burger. Cherry tomatoes have the sweetest taste and are wonderful for snacks and children.

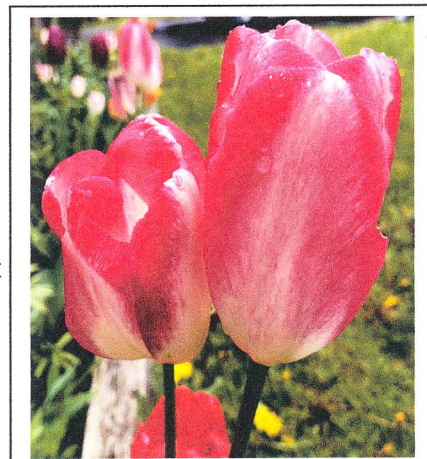
1c. Growing habits: Tomatoes are either **determinate** or **indeterminate**. Learn the difference and remember that indeterminates must be staked early to avoid disease. Determinate or "**bush**" varieties stop growing at about 3 feet tall. These compact plants fruit all at once, and tend to be good for making sauce or canning (when you'd want a lot of tomatoes all at once). Most bush tomatoes like a cage and some are well suited to pots. Indeterminate varieties will keep on producing fruit throughout the season until the plant is killed by frost. These plants get quite large and will need definitely some kind of tall supports (at least 5 feet) so stake or cage plants early. If fruit sprawls across the ground, they will be prone to disease. Indeterminates are great for salads and sandwiches.

1d. Disease-resistance: Tomato names are usually followed by capital letters that stand for resistance to certain diseases. Pay attention to these letters, especially if you have had one of these diseases in your climate before. If you live in temperate climate with lots of moisture, consider blight-resistant tomatoes. Hybrid examples are 'Iron Lady,' 'Defiant,' 'Mountain Magic,' 'Mountain Merit' and 'Jasper.' Heirloom examples are 'Lemon Drop,' 'Matt's Wild Cherry,' and 'Mr. Stripey' (also called Tigerella), 'Jasper', a tasty red cherry. *(To be continued)*

The Tulip Bubble

Tulips were first introduced into Europe by the Ottoman Empire in the 1550s. The flowers were enormously popular among the upper classes in the Netherlands- so much so that the price of a single bulb reached the modern equivalent of more than **\$1 000.00** and they were sold and resold by traders, like today's stocks. The tulip market collapsed in the winter of 1636-37. Then interest simply dried up and several people lost fortunes to the suddenly worthless tulip bulb. Many historians call the 'Tulip Mania' era, as it is known today, the first economic bubble and bursts in modern history.

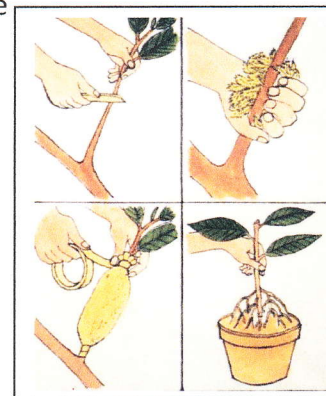
(Thanks to President Jean Bott and Uncle John's Bathroom Reader for this interesting article. Hope to see some of these beauties soon!)



Propagation of House Plants (cont.)

Air Layering

Air layering is a great way to take cuttings from some plants which have become 'leggy'. Using a sharp knife, make a diagonal cut 1"-1 ½" long, slanting upwards. Keep this cut open by sliding a matchstick or toothpick into it, to prevent the stem from healing itself. Dust the cut with a bit of rooting hormone. Remove leaves about 3" above the cut, wrap the wound with damp sphagnum moss, forming a ball around the stem. Wrap the moss in plastic film, or a baggy, and seal it with twist ties or waterproof tape, to prevent water loss. After a few weeks (length of time depends on the plant), roots should be able to be seen through the plastic. When a good root system has formed, take off the plastic, cut the stem just below the roots, and pot it up. The remaining stem on the mother plant can be trimmed up and new buds will form, thickening up the mother plant. This is a good method of propagating plants with woody stems. Another way of air layering is to scrape the top layer of skin or bark from the stem, girdling the entire stem, then following the instructions above.



Why couldn't the gardener plant any flowers? He hadn't botany!

What do you call a garden nursery? Plant Parenthood!

Going Green (Cont. from February)

Peat Pots and Alternatives: Everything You Need to Know to Grow

A Wealth of Knowledge is Lost: Because peat bogs are very acidic they hold a wealth of environmental and social information. Items that are buried in peat bog decay very slowly because of the acidic conditions. This means that scientists can gather a great deal of information about a wide variety of subjects including: 1. The evolution of vegetation 2. The history of the climate 3. Human activity. Carefully conducted archaeological digs of peat bogs have uncovered a great deal of valuable information, artifacts, and even skeletons and remains of human ancestors that have been buried for thousands of years and have not been preserved in any other environment.

How Is Peat Moss Obtained? Unfortunately, when peat moss is mined from these delicate ecosystems a network of drainage ditches is dug along with a series of settling basins. This causes the water to be drained away, and the result is that the bog dries out and dies. With this step complete, all surface vegetation is scraped away and the top layer of peat is exposed to the sun and wind. It is harrowed and ploughed to speed up the process of drying. In just a few short days, the peat which has developed over hundreds of years and provides a wealth of benefits for life on earth is gathered up with a giant vacuum or similar equipment and carried away to be packaged and sold to gardeners for a few dollars.

Can The Damage Be Undone? While some companies have made efforts to restore the wetlands, the fact is that there is no way to restore them to their original condition. The process of mining peat moss causes too much damage to the land, the flora and fauna and the information that is unique to these settings. Scientists say that comparing the reconditioned, managed bogs to the original natural bogs is similar to comparing a tree farm to a natural forest. There simply is no comparison. They are not the same sort of entity. While peat pots are traditional and have been used in the past, with the information we have now, it seems clear that we should seek out more environmentally-friendly alternatives. In the world in which we live, it is essential to make the most of the resources we have. When we remember to reduce, reuse, recycle as often as possible, we can make a real difference in the condition of our one and only habitable planet. (Alternatives to peat containers in April.)

Plant of the Month

Basil

Basil is an annual herb and is used in cooking worldwide. It is sometimes called "the king of herbs." The most common basil grown in North America is sweet basil, also known as Genovese basil, known for its flavour, somewhere between sweet and savoury and subtly both minty and peppery. Whole basil leaves make a great pizza topping. Basil is also the primary ingredient in pesto and is used in making tomato sauce and infused oil and vinegar as well. Culinary basil is most often green, but there are purple varieties that bring colour to both the garden and a dinner plate. Lettuce leaf basil grows extra-large leaves that are not quite as sweet as common sweet basil. For basil that stays short and compact, there's bush basil, which has a more intense flavour than sweet basil. Basil is an annual, but a cutting can be taken and grown indoors before frost kills the plant. I love the colour and smell of a purple basil in floral designs. (I think this is our first herb as Plant of the Month.



Song of March

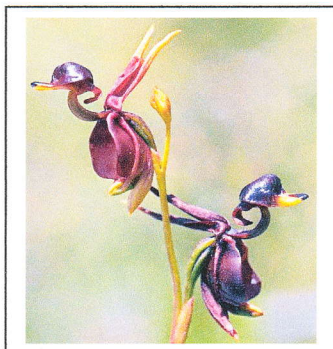
With winter's footprints in the past, and snows begin to melt at last, with longer days and shorter nights, the wayward winds of March take flight. Four winds she holds within her grip, then hurls them from her fingertip.

Her woolly, fleecy clouds of white she sets in skies of blue delight. Her wild bouts of gusty breezes roar through valleys, hills, and trees. That high pitch whistling song she sings awakens earth and flowering things. She tears a hole in heaven's sky so sun can shine and rain can cry. She gently calms as spring draws near, as blooming daffodils appear.

(Patricia Cisco)

Flowers area Amazing

We haven't had any of our 'strangely beautiful' flowers featured lately so here are two of the stranger ones: The 'Flying Duck Orchid' and the 'Laughing Bumblebee Orchid'...



Propagation of House Plants (cont. from November)

Stolons/Runners

Stolons, also referred to as runners, which are prostrate creeping shoots or stems, can be used to begin new plants. Place the plantlet attached to the runner into plant medium in another pot and hold it down with a paperclip or similar item. When the roots develop on the plantlet, it may be cut free from the mother plant. Another way is to simply remove the plantlet, along with a bit of stem, and root it as a stem cutting. Some plants, such as spider plants, root well this way, while others, such as strawberries, Erythronium (Trout Lily), and seem to better being left attached to its parent until rooted. Some runners form along the top of the soil, some actually run under the soil from the roots.

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