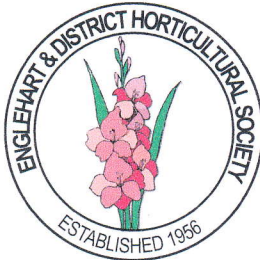




'Through The Garden Gate'

The monthly newsletter of the Englehart and District Horticultural Society
May 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:
englehartort.weebly.com

Garden for Long Lasting Interest

A well designed garden provides interest from early spring through late autumn and beyond if you also select plants for winter structure. For the main growing season, much of that interest comes from flowering and foliage plants. Gardeners who want a lower maintenance landscape would be wise to look for perennial plants that are both easy to grow and offer a long blooming period. Most perennial plants flower for two to four weeks, but the longest flowering perennials, like coneflowers and catmint, measure their flowering period in months, not weeks. When planning a garden with long-blooming plants the same basic principles of design apply ... choose a mixture of early, mid-season, and late-flowering plants, both perennial and annual. Of course, you can also affect both the bloom time and length of the flowering period with pruning practices like pinching, deadheading, and shearing. (Denis Mailloux)

(I also like to grow plants, both annuals and perennials which have interesting seed heads that can add something extra to the garden. With our short summers and loong winters, it's important to have something interesting to look at through the frosty windows! EF)

Mark It On Your Calendar

May 24: Victoria Day ...will you be working in your gardens?
August: Youth Garden Contest Judging(date to be set later)



Ten Tips for Growing Tomatoes (cont.)



- 4. Preheat Garden Soil and Beef It Up:** Be careful not to plant tomatoes in the ground too soon. They are heat-lovers. Your soil temperature must be consistently over 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Warm the soil with plastic a couple of weeks before you intend to plant. If it's still iffy, protect seedlings from the cold with sheets or row covers. Tomatoes thrive in rich, well-draining, slightly acidic soil with a pH of 6.5 to 6.8. Two weeks before planting your tomato plants outdoors, beef up that soil! Dig into soil about 1 foot deep and mix in aged manure or compost.
- 5. Plant Tomatoes Deeply:** When you do plant tomatoes, plant a little deeper than they come in the pot, all the way up to the top few leaves! Tomatoes root along their stems so this tip helps them develop stronger roots. With leggy transplants, dig a trench and lay the stem sideways, bending gently upward. Snip or pinch off the lower branches and cover with soil up to the first set of leaves. This extra root growth will produce a stronger, more robust plant
- 6 Mulching Tomato Plants:** Don't forget to add a blanket of mulch! It helps to conserve moisture and keeps soil-borne disease spores from being splashed up onto the plants. There are many good mulches to choose from—shredded pine bark, straw, shredded leaves, grass clippings, composted leaves, or even a thick layer of newspaper. Oddly enough, red plastic has been found to increase fruiting by 12 to 20%.

Common Raised Garden Bed Mistakes You Might Be Making

About 15 years ago I became tired of fighting heavy clay soil in my vegetable garden...it stayed wet long into June, the weeds were awful, etc. We decided to build some raised beds to take the in-ground garden's place. Since then, we have added more raised boxes and I have been very happy. When I found this interesting article, I wished I had seen it years ago, so for those of you considering raised beds, here are some ideas to keep in mind...

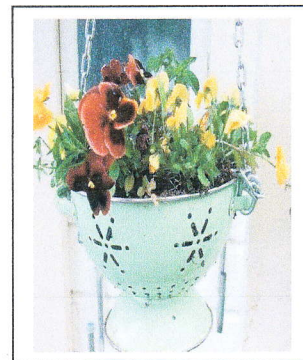
How you build and maintain your growing space can affect your success. Here's what to avoid so you can boost your backyard bounty: Planning a raised bed garden always starts with so much promise. These elevated growing spaces offer several benefits over in-ground gardens, such as easier accessibility, 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 choosing 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. (to be continued)

It's Time to Improvise

As a plant lover myself, I have often run out of pots in the spring, just when everything needs to be potted or repotted. So, "needs must" as my mother used to say....here are a few suggestions that can come in handy and can often be made to look interesting, even trendy... old purses, the lower half of plastic bottles, tin cans, wooden pallets, eaves trough, pails (plastic or metal), styrofoam coolers, plastic-lined baskets, glass jars, over- the- door- shoe organizers to name a few. I have actually used quite a few of these, including the shoe organizer (I used it for growing herbs). If you keep the plants growing in the containers through the summer, be prepared to water some of them more often as 'pots' such as the styrofoam and cloth shoe organizers will dry out more quickly than others. It is relatively easy to make holes in most of the above but some, like glass jars, will need a good layer of pebbles in the bottom, under the soil instead. Shallow rooted herbs will be fine in something like eaves trough or the shoe organizers. Just don't forget drainage. (I have used a thick layer of stones in glass jars.)



In Memoriam... Wilda Rowlandson

It is with great sadness that I type this. Wilda passed away at her home on May 22, 2021. She joined our society many years ago and quickly became an integral part of the group. She became a Director and worked tirelessly for the Society as part of many committees. Wilda was a very quiet and unassuming woman who did not enjoy being the centre of attention but was always available to help in any way she could. She enjoyed the social aspect of our group and looked forward to attending meetings. She also represented our Society at various District Meetings as well as several OHA Conventions. We will miss her very much.



Making Your Own Insecticidal Soap

Home gardeners have long used homemade insecticidal soap for insect control of harmful bugs on plants. Over a century ago fish-oil soap was a common solution. "Natural control" of pests is not something new in today's eco-friendly world. 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 "insect killing soap." Use a true safer soap, like Dr. Bonner's Castile soap and not a dish detergent or dish soap. The 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. 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 pests. One of the best potassium based insecticidal soap spray products is Safer Insecticidal Soap, which controls many bug pests found on houseplants, vegetables, and fruit. You can also use Neem oil for plants (if you can find it.) Another favourite is Diatomaceous Earth. (to be continued)



Ten Tips for Growing Tomatoes (cont.)



- 7. Pruning Tomato Plants:** After your tomato plants reach about 3 feet tall, remove the oldest leaves from the bottom foot of the stem. This reduces fungus problems because the leaves are usually shaded by the rest of the plant and near the soil. Spraying weekly with compost tea also seems to help prevent fungal disease. *To pinch or not to pinch, that is the question.* Most gardeners pinch and remove the suckers that form between the main stalk and the side branches during the early growth of their plants. These will not bear fruit. Regarding pruning branches... it is a choice you make. Some people remove some upper branches to allow sun on the developing tomatoes. On the other hand, too much sun causes sun scald on the fruit itself. Unpruned plants produce more fruit but it takes longer for the fruit to ripen. On the other hand, the fruit is usually sweeter as the more leaves- the more sugar is produced during photosynthesis. It really comes down to a personal choice. If the plant is an indeterminate variety and is simply getting too tall, go ahead and remove some top branches.
- 8. Watering:** Tomato plants need 1 -2" (2 ½ - 5cm) of water a week. Water deeply. A soaker hose covered with mulch works well positioned near the plants. Water consistently to avoid blossom-end rot and to prevent the fruit from cracking. Stressed plants take calcium from the fruit and send it to the side shoots to keep the plant growing. High soil acidity and excessive nitrogen also contribute to problems.

Plant of the Month

Love in a Mist ((*Nigella damascene*))

Nigella is an annual flower which blooms in shades of blue, pink, and white. It is easily grown from seed. Each flower is surrounded by a fern-like netting or "mist" which gives it a lovely soft appearance. These dainty flowers are interesting and beautiful, despite their small size. It prefers a medium moist soil that is well drained. The flowers give way to a balloon-like seed pod which can be dried and used in dried designs, wall hangings, etc. It will grow in full sun to partial shade. Love-in-a-mist will last seven to 10 days when cut and placed in a vase. It is fairly easy to grow from seed indoors and transplanted outside when it is warmer. *Nigella* seeds are widely used as a spice and condiment in Indian and Middle Eastern cuisine. They can be dry-roasted and used to give a smoky, nutty flavor to curries, vegetables, and beans.



Rhubarb... Benefits, Uses, and the Holy Grail of Pie

A traditional summer delicacy for some and a culinary curiosity for others, rhubarb has a reputation for both its tangy flavour and mystique. Although it rarely makes its way to the table, it adds both taste and nutrition when it does. Rhubarb even boasts an array of health benefits! Here we'll dive into what makes this colourful stalk so special!

What Is Rhubarb? With beautiful pink and green stalks and huge heart-shaped leaves, this celery look-alike certainly stands out in the garden. Culinary rhubarb (*Rheum rhubarbarum*) is in the buckwheat family (Polygonaceae) and shares the genus *Rheum* with upwards of 50 fascinating species. Another example, Chinese rhubarb (*Rheum officinale*) has been widely used for its medicinal benefits of improving digestive health. As a food, rhubarb has only gained popularity in the past few centuries. Though it's especially popular in sweets, it may surprise you that rhubarb is technically a vegetable! When we eat the roots, stems, or leaves of plants, we are eating vegetables. On the other hand, fruits develop from flowers and carry seeds.

Rhubarb in the Garden: One huge perk of rhubarb is its growing season. It's able to survive (and even thrive) wintry conditions, so it makes a great crop for higher latitude gardens. Additionally, it is one of the first crops ready in the spring! So if you're an impatient gardener, planting this easy-going plant could give you more instant gratification.

Wait...Rhubarb Is Poisonous? Yes and no. But don't worry! You may have noticed when looking at recipes or passing the rhubarb in the grocery store, that only the stalks or stems of the plant are used for cooking. Rhubarb stalks are safe to eat (and delicious), while the leaves do more harm than good. (To be continued)

Poetry and Prose

May Day

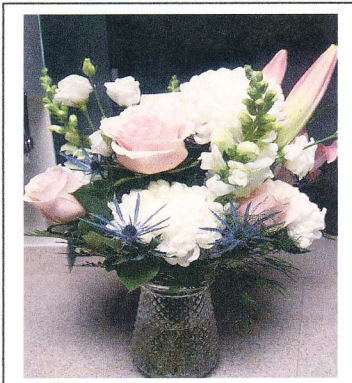
*"A delicate fabric of bird song
Floats in the air,
The smell of wet wild earth
Is everywhere.
Oh I must pass nothing by
Without loving it much,
The raindrop try with my lips,
The grass with my touch;
For how can I be sure
I shall see again
The world on the first of May
Shining after the rain?"*

Sara Teasdale

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Helping Us Get Through Covid

We have all been going through an unprecedented time this past year. It has affected nearly every aspect of our daily lives. I know I am missing our monthly meetings where many of my social and educational needs are met. Thanks to our Vice President, Evelyne Nemcsok, who came up with the idea of holding a virtual photographic competition, we have been able to share and enjoy seeing beautiful pictures of plants and gardens. Thank you, Ev. Thanks to Joyce who along with yours truly, had the wonderful/awful job of judging all of the wonderful entries, and thanks to all members who participated! I wish we could include all of the photos here. **Adult Classes** included 1. *An Insect* 2. *Snow/Frost on Foliage* 3. *Sign of Spring Flower Arrangement*. **Youth classes:** 1. *A Rainbow* (any material) 2. *An Upcycled Seed Starter* 3. *A Wind Chime* Below are some of the many entries we received



1st: Diane Gagne McKean's Spring Flower Arrangement



1st: Joe Muething's Insect



1st: Mary Schippers' Frost/Snow on Foliage

The Youth Contest Participants were divided into classes by age.



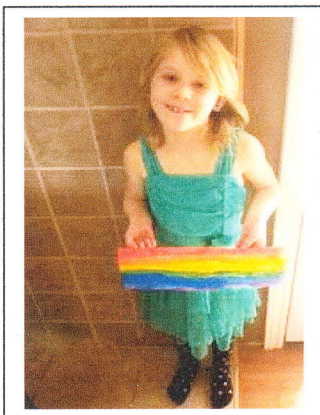
1st: JK-SK Leona Charette's Rainbow



1st: JK-SK Kam Tucker's Seed Starter



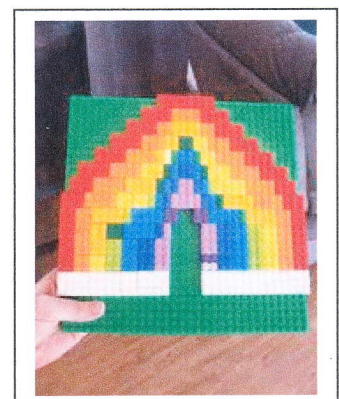
1st: Myles Tucker's Wind Chime



1st: Leah Fehr's Rainbow



1st: Georgia Tucker's Seed Starter



1st: Lily Fehr's Rainbow