



'Through The Garden Gate'

The monthly newsletter of the Englehart and District Horticultural Society
November/December 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

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A Message from our President

Summer seemed to continue - even into mid October. The Swiss chard kept on giving. The shades of yellow in the nasturtiums were truly vibrant and the fuchsia was as lush as springtime. I do know this extended summer couldn't last but it has been lovely. As I planted daffodil bulbs and found a special spot for a sumac root I'd been given, my mind drifted to Hort projects we've shared. I miss our times together. I'm hoping as the cooler weather seeps in that our health issues will dissipate and we can resume our activities. I'm thinking especially about our Christmas workshop. Maybe we could individually choose a seasonal idea to do, or set aside a specific time to all do a Christmas craft. It would be fun to imagine we were all working together again creating holiday cheer. Maybe our program people have a few ideas for us. Have an awesome fall. Albert Camus tells us, "Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower." Autumn blessing to you.

President, Jean Bott

A Message from the Editor

This will be our last bulletin for this year. I hope everyone is well and looking forward to better times in 2022. We can't complain about the beautiful autumn we have had. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for an equally pleasant winter (but I know I'm fooling myself.) My New Year's wish is that we will soon be able to meet together as a group and share our gardening experiences, listen to interesting speakers, participate in the Plant and Bake Sale, and just enjoy each other's company. All the best for the end of 2021 and a happy and healthy 2022 to all. *Eileen*

Time for Some Humour

- What was green and a great trick shooter? Annie Okra
- Definition of a 'bulb': a potential flower buried in autumn, never to be seen again.
- A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows.
- I want to start gardening, but I haven't botany plants. (groan!)
- I've started to plant my herbs in alphabetical order. People ask me how I find the time. I tell them "It's next to the sage".
- Has anyone else's gardening skills improved during this quarantine like mine have? I planted myself on my couch at the beginning of June and I've grown significantly since.

The Benefits of Gardening

Nutritional Benefits- fresh fruit and vegetables: There is nothing like the taste of a tomato picked red and ripe from your own garden. You can be sure that you will appreciate the fact that you have grown something delicious, nutritious, and you can be fully aware of the health benefits and purity of the food you have produced.

Mood-boosting benefits: There is little that feels better than having your hands in the dirt, watching your plants grow big and healthy. Gardening builds a sense of pride and self-confidence that you feel when something you have grown is delicious and nutritious for you and your family.

Enjoyable aerobic exercise: An hour or two of gardening is even better than going to a gym. You are using many different muscles in all parts of your body, you are breathing good clean air, and you are your own boss, so you can set your own pace.

Decreased dementia risk: A 2006 study found that gardening could lower risk of dementia by 36%.

Sleep may improve: I know I always sleep better after a good day of gardening.

Community Gardens Help Combat Loneliness: After retirement, many people struggle with fewer socialization opportunities, and community gardens and Horticultural Society memberships can be a fun way to engage with others while providing benefits to neighbourhoods. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, community gardens are "collaborative projects on shared open spaces where participants join together in the maintenance and products of the garden, including healthful and affordable fresh fruits and vegetables."

What to Do With Used Potting Mix?

Reusing last year's potting mix for this year's container garden is certainly an economical idea. However, at the end of the growing season, a potting mix's fertility is at a minimum, and there might not be enough nutrients for your flowers to be happy and healthy. Adding new mix to the old means this season's plants will get what they need. Here are some tips to help you be resourceful with used potting mix and still grow a great container garden.

Save potting mix the right way: In fall, pull up any dead plants and shake out the roots. If you see live adults, cocoons or egg masses trying to overwinter in the mix, pick them out. If the plants in the container had a disease, that mix should be bagged up and sent out with the trash. (Don't re-use potting mixes used to grow tomatoes because there is a risk of spreading blight to a new crop.) Keep the rest of the soil tucked away in a garage, basement or shed for the winter.

Reuse potting mix in spring: In the spring, break apart the clump of potting mix in the tub or spread it out on a tarp. Add fresh potting mix so the ratio is 50 percent old to 50 percent new, and stir together along with a slow-release fertilizer. Or add 25 percent compost to 75 percent old potting mix with a couple handfuls of organic additive like fish meal or worm castings. Be sure to mix it all thoroughly so the textures are evened out. Then pot up your containers as usual!

Don't just top off: You might be tempted to pour new mix overtop the old and call it good. Yes, plant roots will grow easily in new potting mix, but they will struggle to spread out into hard, dry, compacted old mix beneath. Be sure to break up the old material and blend thoroughly with the new.

(I must admit that I feel just a tad uncomfortable including this article in the bulletin but I decided we are all grown ups and can make our own decisions re reusing soil. I will admit that I have certainly done this for years, with good results but I also admit that I fertilise my outdoor pots as well. I always make sure only to keep soil from pots of plants that have been healthy and had no diseases/pests and I put it in the bottom of any pot I am planning to use. When it comes right down to it...I'm cheap!

(From 'Garden Gate' magazine)

Tough Plants for Challenging Spots

We here in northern Ontario know all about this...our summers are short but often very intense. Our winters can be harsh and cold with strong winds feeling like they come from the North Pole! Sometimes it feels like our springs are almost nonexistent as we seem to change from freezing cold to hot summer days...the result of our continental climate. Still, we imagine having a gorgeous garden but we may have some challenges ...a steep slopeclay soil which drains slowlyblazing sun and heat exposure to high winds. The quick and easy answer is that there are many plants available now that are as tough as nails. **Exposed Sunny and Windy Locations:** Stonecrop (sedum) and Hens and Chicks (Sempervivum): Some people plant green rooves with these for a reason: they can take the heat and drought, plus our forgetfulness that they're there, until they bloom in early summer through fall, depending on the species and variety, when everyone notices them. Choose from the ground-hugging Sempervivums which flower in early summer to the 60 cm tall Autumn Joy sedums that flower for up to 10 weeks. All attract pollinators, including honeybees and butterflies. Salvia yangii (Russian Sage/Perovskia): Tall, handsome, and a prolific bloomer from midsummer through early fall in blue and purple tones, Russian Sage is one of those plants that you can ignore all summer while you're off doing other things. It'll grow to a metre in height and is a must have for the pollinators garden. Purple Coneflower (Echinacea): This is a prairie native and that is about all you need to know. Indestructible in hot, dry, windy locations, it will reach about a metre high with long blooming purple flowers and is another pollinating plant in the winners' circle. Lamb's Ears: (Stachys): A sprawling pale creamy green plant that you will likely recognize the moment you see it. It matures to 50 cm wide and tall with lavender-coloured flowers in early-to-midsummer. The leaves feel like their namesake when you touch the them...smooth and velvety without the lamb smell. (Most plants with hairy leaves tend to require less water than average, as the hair itself provides insulation during hot, dry weather.) Some plants that fit this carefree category include Geranium (both annual and perennial), the Mint family, Yarrow, Shasta daisies, Artemisia, and Rudbeckia. (To be continued)

Twist and Sprout

Sprouts and microgreens are healthy, tasty, and can be grown right here in Ontario. The following article, from the *Food and Drink magazine*, gives us more detail on growing them successfully.

What are some of the advantages of growing sprouts in Ontario? If you want to grow food twelve months of the year, sprouts are the easiest to do. In one to two weeks, you get fresh, nutrient-dense food. You can get nearly everything you need from sprouts. It's why many herbivores can live off just grass.

What is the difference between sprouts and microgreens? They're basically the same- seeds grown to the first set of leaves, called cotyledons. Sprouts are grown in water and you get the whole plant. With microgreens, the seeds are in soil and you let them grow a bit longer and then cut them above the soil.

Is it easy to grow sprouts at home? We have short video courses on our website showing a step-by-step process for both sprouts and microgreens. It just takes a minute to water three times a day, and you're in business. It's very economical: 30 to 40 cents worth of seeds will give you one pound of sprouts.

Any tips for the home grower? Alfalfa and clover are two of the easiest to grow. The key is to switch them from a jar to an open mesh basket after four days, which allows them to breathe and eliminates mushiness. Expose them to the lights in the kitchen or a north-facing window and use cold water. Sprouts give off heat when they grow and it cools them down.

Beyond sandwiches and salads, what are some interesting ways to use sprouts? A lot of people say, "I can't eat those hairy little things." So- throw them into smoothies. Moms are always hiding things that way!" (Thanks to President Jean Bott for finding this interesting little article to share.)

Plant of the Month

Hoya

Give hoyas bright, indirect light, humidity and a light touch when it comes to watering. Use a potting mix that allows for good air circulation around the roots although they like to be crowded in their pots. They will only need to be repotted every two or three years. Water regularly with room-temperature water, spring through summer. Let the top layer of soil dry between watering. In the fall and winter growth naturally slows down and they won't use as much water. Water sparingly during fall and winter, giving them just enough that the soil doesn't dry out completely. Hoyas are tropical plants that thrive in humid conditions. Misting with room-temperature water also helps but avoid spraying the flowers which are very perfumed. Prune in spring before vigorous growth begins. The stems with no leaves are called spurs and shouldn't be removed. Flowers are produced on the same spurs year after year. Hoyas are vining plants that will happily cascade from a shelf or window sill.



Plants in North Facing Windows

Creating the Most Attractive Setting: Grouping a lot of plants in north-facing windows gives the opportunity to create a very textured display. Plants growing in the under-story (low light plants) of the rainforest are many and varied, yet they all need the same constant, measured amount of light your window will provide. Because of this, you can set up a lush and eclectic garden that is very pleasing to the eye. Some of the best plants for a large northern window include orchids of all sorts, various types of dieffenbachia, a wide variety of ferns, different types of colourful bromeliads and a variety of others such as: *Philodendron Ctenanthe Aralia Albuca Spiralis Monstera adansonii Cyclamen Aspidistra (iron Plant) Gardenia Aucuba Cissus (grape ivy) & Cissus discolor (rex begonia vine)*. If your window is on the smaller side, these compact plants may be better choices: *Miniature Cyclamen Spanish Pepper Sword Fern Fittonia Plants Aglaonema Adiantum (Maidenhair fern) Pilea*. In addition to low-light loving houseplants, you can also add some seasonal color to your northern window garden by bringing in seasonal bloomers such as *Chrysanthemums Poinsettias Primroses Cyclamen Moth Orchids Daffodils Flowering Azaleas Senecio, and, of course, African Violets (flower all year round)* When the plants have finished their blooming cycle, move them to a more suitable location and replace them with other temporary colour sources. (to be continued)
A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust. –(Gertrude Jekyll)

Poetry and Prose

November

In November

Dark comes soon.

*We turn on the lights
in the afternoon.*

No sunshine, lots of rain.

No warm days

Snow again.

No bugs or bees

No leaves on trees.

You must remember...

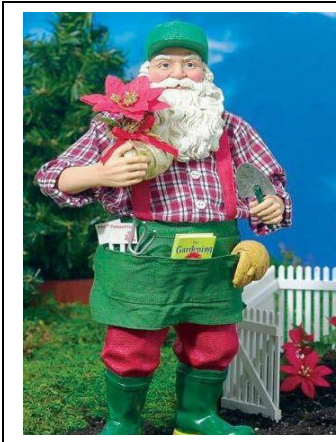
This is November!

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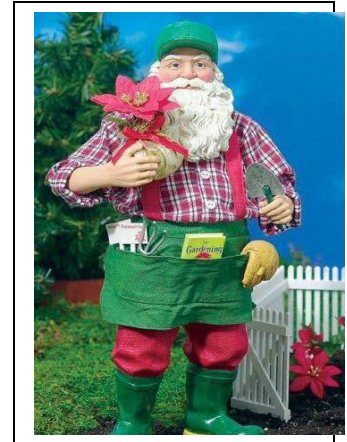
This has been such a difficult year for all of us. Between fear of contracting Covid, missing our friends and families, not having our regular meetings, wearing masks, and avoiding physical contact with friends and neighbours, most of us have been so thankful for our gardens and houseplants. (I know my houseplants have never been so well cared for.) It will be pleasant to have a Christmas holiday to look forward to. I know I'm hoping to have time with family and friends. I hope the following 'poem' will give you a smile and lift your spirits.

Merry Christmas to All and to All a Green Thumb

*'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the yard
The branches were bare and the ground frozen hard.
The roses were dormant and mulched all around
To protect them from damage if frost heaved the ground.
The perennials were nestled all snug in their beds
While visions of 5-10-5 danced in their heads.
The new-planted shrubs had been soaked by the hose
To settle their heads for the long winter's doze.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But a truck full of gifts of gardening gear!
St. Nick was the driver, that jolly old elf*



*And he winked as he said
"I'm a gardener myself!
To help with the weeding,
here's weed-no-more
And to battle the bugs,
Here's Wilson's 'Organic Four'.
To seed your new lawn
I've a patented sower,
In case it should grow...
Here's a new power mower!*



*With colourful flagstones lay a garden path
For the kids to enjoy- a bird feeder and bath.
And last but not least-some well-rotted manure
A green Christmas all year the gifts will ensure!"
Then Jolly St., Nick, having emptied his load,
Started his truck and took to the road,
And I heard him exclaim through the motor's hum
Merry Christmas to all
And to all a green thumb!"
(Author unknown)*

(I know that it's a bit early, but as this is the bulletin for November and December, I think it's alright.)