

# THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

After the coolest, wettest spring I can remember, July came along with no rain and wonderfully warm sunshine. I'm sure the plants were going 'what the heck'. Anyway, I'm sure you noticed how well all the plants are growing now. Vegetables like tomatoes, herbs like basil and perennials like Echinacea are growing & blooming like crazy. Catching up I think after just sitting there and moping earlier in the season. With such warm, dry (.6 mm of rain this month versus the normal 39.9mm) weather don't forget to keep your gardens well watered. And don't forget the boulevard trees, especially the newly planted ones. They will greatly appreciate a good watering. Speaking of watering remember, a long, deep watering 2 or 3 times a week is much better for your plants than a 5 minute watering every other day.

You've probably noticed a hole or two in your garden where a plant didn't grow or didn't grow properly, didn't reach the size it was supposed to or it just went missing for some reason. A lot of people think that by August it is just too late to do anything about those annoying empty spaces in the garden but it isn't so. August is a great month to plant in. The soil is warm, the days are still fairly long and now the nights are cooler. As long as you keep your new plantings well watered they will settle in quickly and grow right into the fall. So, fill those annoying holes with a few colourful perennials and then you will really and truly be able to relax and enjoy what you have created. At least until September when the spring bulbs arrive.

In this issue I will be writing about Spring Bulbs, Vegetable Winter Gardening, Plant of the Month, Botanical Latin, The To Do List and Emi will be writing about a common garden pest in August.

Enjoy!

Bob



**Aster Henry 3rd**

## WINTER VEGETABLE GARDENING

Vegetable gardening has definitely enjoyed a resurgence in the last couple of years and now that renewed interest is moving into the fall and winter gardening season. When considering fall & winter gardening there are two things to look at. First off you want to look at winter crop protection for your vegetables and what are the best vegetables to grow in the fall & winter. Here is some useful information for you and your garden.

### Winter Crop Protection

Some protection from cold, wind, and snow will certainly increase success for winter gardeners. We recommend the use of raised beds whenever possible, as they provide extra drainage, and will warm faster in brief winter sunny periods. Raised beds are easy to modify for use with cloche greenhouses, wind protection, and heavy row cover. Used in combination, these methods can ensure a bountiful harvest of fresh vegetables all winter long.

Even just planting against a south-facing wall can offer enough reflected/radiant heat and wind protection for many winter vegetables. Our customers have spoken of brushing snow off of unprotected Mizuna and finding it completely healthy and ready to eat. Imagine showing up at Christmas dinner with a fresh salad that you harvested that afternoon!

When growing carrots and other root vegetables over winter, consider planting in raised beds and adding a bit of straw around them for further insulation from hard frosts. Beneath a heavy row cover, their green tops will continue growing quite happily, and their roots will become sweeter with the cold – all with no threat from pests.

Heavy row cover acts like a blanket – storing heat in the air and soil beneath – and can add up to 5° Celsius to planted rows. Its benefits will increase if it is used in combination with a dark mulch – black plastic or landscape fabric will absorb more of the sun's energy during the day, so it will take longer for the ground to cool down at night. It can also be folded or used in two layers for further protection, although light penetration will be reduced.

Even in the short days of winter, you can Eat Local and Grow Food!

### BEST WINTER GARDEN VEGETABLES

Some vegetable varieties thrive in the cool conditions of fall and early winter, and offered a bit of protection from extreme cold, they can be harvested right through until spring. Many varieties actually improve in flavour, texture, and sweetness once the cold weather arrives.

As you would start many vegetables in late winter and early spring for summer harvests, winter gardening requires sowing seeds in mid- to late summer. This allows the plants to gain a little growth before the days begin to get shorter and the sunlight becomes less intense. The secret is choosing the right vegetables and thinking ahead.

#### Varieties for winter harvest:

**Arugula:** Sow from June to the end of August for harvests in fall, winter, and spring. High in Vitamin A and potassium, with a tangy, nutty flavour. Winter-grown arugula has a very different, milder flavour than the same plant grown in hot weather

**Beets:** Sow beets every three weeks from early spring to the end of July. Late sown beets can be harvested as beetroot or leafy greens from fall to winter. All beets have cold-hardiness, but Red Ace and Winterkeeper are particularly suited to winter gardening. Use crop protection for a longer harvest.

**Broccoli:** Sow some indoors in midsummer to transplant out before the end of August, and harvest in fall and early winter. Raab varieties can be harvested quite late without protection.

**Brussels sprouts:** Sow indoors in early June, and transplant seedlings outside in early August. These can be harvested over the winter and into spring. Frost adds to the sweetness of the edible buds.

**Cabbage:** Sow winter varieties in June and July to harvest in fall and winter – try Danish Ballhead, Embassy, January King, and Ermosa.

**Carrots:** Sow every three weeks from early spring to around July 7 for mature winter carrots, and sow again in the first two weeks of August for winter harvests. Carrots become very sweet in the cold, and all varieties are suited to winter gardening, or – try Campestra, Bolero, and Scarlet Nantes for the best hardiness. Use crop protection for a longer harvest.

**Cilantro:** Sow this tangy herb every three weeks right up to the end of August, and harvest young plants in fall and winter. Cilantro grows best in cold weather, and tends to bolt in heat. Grown under cover, it should survive all winter.

**Collards:** Sow this under-exploited, cold-hardy, leafy vegetable to the middle of July, and harvest from fall to spring for steamed greens and stir-fries. Collards can grow without any protection.

**Corn salad:** Sometimes called Mâche, this is the hardiest winter salad green, and can be sown as late as mid-September for harvests right into spring. Use the leaves as you would lettuce – the mild, nutty taste makes a fine background for stronger flavours from arugula, scallions, and other winter vegetables. Use crop protection for a longer harvest.

**Endive & Radicchio:** Sow from late June to early August, and add great texture and colour to salads from early fall right through winter. Endives can be sown as late as mid-September. Use crop protection for a longer harvest.

**Kale:** Sow this workhorse of a vegetable until mid-July for fall and winter harvests. All varieties grow sweeter after frost and can be grown without cover. Kale has the highest levels of beta-carotene of any vegetable and is also rich in Vitamin C and calcium.

**Kohlrabi:** Sow from late July to mid-August, and harvest in the fall and winter. The variety called Superschmeltz can be harvested right through until April. The swollen stems of kohlrabi contain high levels of Vitamin C, and grow sweeter after frost. No winter protection is required.

**Leeks:** Sow the Dutch variety Bandit from March to the end of June to harvest as late as April the following spring. Harvest any time once the stems are over 1 inch thick – great in soups, stews, and gravies.

**Lettuce:** With protection, all lettuces can be grown over winter, but varieties like Continuity, Winter Density, Cimmaron, and Rouge d'Hiver are particularly hardy. Sow every three weeks from March to September, but provide frost protection beneath heavy row cover or a cloche greenhouse. Surprise your friends with fresh salads at holiday dinners!

**Mibuna, Mizuna, & Komatsuna:** Sow these tasty Asian greens to the end of August or early September for harvests in fall to late winter. These are very hardy plants, and may survive without winter protection. Great in salads and stir-fries.

**Parsley:** Sow to the end of July, and parsley will produce all winter with a bit of crop protection. It is rich in both Vitamin C and iron. The conventional curly variety, Forest Green, may do better than the flat leaf Italian over winter.

**Parsnips:** Sow to mid-July and treat like carrots once the cold weather arrives. Parsnips are sweeter after frost, and hold particularly well in the ground. Try mulching with a bit of straw to keep hard frosts from damaging the plants in late winter.

**Rutabagas:** Sow mid-June to late July and harvest these cold hardy “winter turnips” from fall through spring. No protection is needed!

**Scallions:** Call them what you will – spring onions, salad onions, green onions – these can be sown indoors in early spring and direct sown from March right to early August outdoors. Late sown scallions will be ready for harvest right through to the following spring. Use crop protection for a longer harvest.

**Sorrel:** Sow this perennial from May to June, and harvest the lemony leaves at 4 to 6 inches long. Expect sorrel to bolt in hot weather, but it keeps growing and growing all year. With some minor protection, leaves can be picked all winter long – they will re-grow. Once established, sorrel is easy to propagate by division.

**Spinach:** Treat all varieties as a salad crop beneath cloche tunnels from first to last frost. Sow freely right to the end of October. Spinach thrives in cold weather, but requires some protection.

**Swiss Chard:** Sow until late July, and enjoy the leaves and stems of this colourful plant until mid-winter. Chard is full of iron, calcium, Vitamin C, and beta-carotene. Younger plants may benefit from some crop protection.

**Turnips:** Sow from spring to the end of August for a succession of harvests from fall through spring. Grown under cover, the greens are a delightful winter treat, but the roots hold well in cold soil with no protection.

**Varieties to try for late fall harvest:**

**Broccoli** – set out transplants in mid-August.

**Cauliflower** – set out transplants in early August.

**Peas** – direct sow in early July for a fall harvest.

**Radish** – some varieties handle cold very well and can be harvested well after first frost.

**Overwintering varieties for spring/summer harvest:**

**Broad beans** – sow in October/November for summer eating.

**Broccoli, sprouting** – set out transplants by mid-August for early/mid-spring harvests.

**Cabbage** – choose overwintering varieties for spring harvests.

**Garlic** – plant bulbs in September and October for masses of fresh garlic the following July.

**Onions** – overwintering varieties need no protection and will be ready to harvest in June from direct sowing the previous August.

The above article is courtesy of West Coast Seeds.

**The trouble with gardening is that it does not remain an avocation. It becomes an obsession.**

**- Phyllis McGinley**

## Only For Those Who Receive The Natural Gardener Newsletter

Starting this month there will be a monthly discount special on a special item or on special items that is only available to readers of The Natural Gardener Newsletter. All you have to do is come into the store, tell us you read about this month's special and you will receive your discount on that item or items.

## The August Special

August's special is **25% off** all clematis and all roses! Come on by and have a look at our selection.

## AUGUST TO DO LIST

- Sow seeds of fall veggies and annuals
- Plan perennial beds for fall and winter colour with ornamental grasses, fall-blooming bulbs, heucheras and hardy heaths and heathers
- Divide and transplant bearded iris
- Harvest vegetables continuously to stretch their season
- Prune summer-blooming shrubs (hydrangea, clethra, caryopteris) after flowers finish
- Plant garlic now for spring harvests
- Look forward to something different next spring: try alliums in your bulb garden
- Sow seeds of cool-weather herbs (chives, parsley)
- Sprinkle compost starter to speed up composting for fall soil building
- Dig gently to harvest potatoes a few plants at a time
- Sow seeds of cool-weather herbs (chives, parsley, garlic chives, cilantro and dill)
- Keep cool during summer's dog days with a shade garden embroidered with hostas and hardy ferns
- Colour up your bulb garden with fall bloomers (fall crocus)
- Take time to enjoy a glass of wine and a good book in your garden

**A garden is always a series of losses set against a few triumphs, like life itself.**

**- May Sarton**

## CHAFER BEETLE NEMATODES

There is still time to apply the nematodes that attack the Chafer Beetle larvae and we have a few packages left for anyone who needs them. To be the most effective it is best to apply them in the last two weeks of July and the first week or so of August so you still have time. Just give us a call and we can set them aside for you. The cost is \$75.00 and will cover approximately 750 square feet.



## SPRING BULBS 2010

I know it's hard to believe but spring bulb planting time is just around the corner. I've ordered some beautiful bulbs, some unusual bulbs and some old favourites for your planting pleasure. Here's a sampling of what is coming at the end of this month.

### Tulip 'Mondial'

Mondial is a lovely, double white tulip that will add a touch of class to your early spring garden.



### Tulip 'China Town'

If you want something unusual and artistic in your garden next spring this is the tulip for you. Truly stunning the buds and leaves are beautifully variegated.



### Tulip 'Blue Diamond'

Blue Diamond is a stunning purple/blue tulip that will contrast nicely with yellow tulips or daffodils.



### Narcissus 'Irene Copeland'

Irene Copeland is a lovely, elegant double flowered narcissus with whitish-yellow petals.



**Narcissus 'Pacific Coast'**

This delightful, miniature narcissus has 4 to 5 flowers per stem and is perfect in a pot, rock garden or at the front of the border.



**Colchicum 'The Giant'**

This 'autumn crocus' sends up its lovely, large, lavender pink flowers in September with the leaves following in early spring. The Giant is a perfect bulb to plant under deciduous trees.



**Allium 'Forelock'**

Forelock is a fun to grow, egg-shaped variety which is topped with a distinctive and unusual forelock or tuft of elongated florets. It blooms in late spring to early summer.



**Allium 'Purple Sensation'**

Purple Sensation is sure to turn heads with its 4-inch wide globes of tightly packed pink-purple florets which sit at the top of a tall, thick, bare stem. The low strap-like foliage turns down as the plant blooms, making the spherical cluster of blooms a focal point in your garden.



**Allium 'Mount Everest'**

This tall Allium hybrid produces large 6" spheres of creamy white flowers - like giant snowballs. The plants are vigorous and the flowers are long-lasting.



## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### Rodgersia pinnata 'Elegans'

With its bold, divided leaves Rodgersia pinnata 'Elegans' forms an exotic-looking clump that adds a unique foliage accent to any moist border. Its large airy plumes of soft-pink to ivory flowers appear in early to mid-summer, and are useful for cutting or even drying. Elegans prefers a moist, dappled shade setting, but will grow in full sun at the waterside. It is useful as a bold, architectural specimen plant. Older clumps seldom need dividing, but this may be done in early spring. Just remember that divisions take a few years to settle back in. The foliage often takes on a bronze caste when first emerging in the spring and again in the fall. It is important to water well during dry weather.

Zone: 4

Soil: Moist

Light: Part shade to full shade. Will grow in full sun if it is at the waters edge.

Height: 4 feet

Width: 3 feet



## BOTANICAL LATIN

On our continuing quest to understand what the heck the latin names of our favourite plants mean here is the next word of the month:

**Flore Pleno** – It means with double flowers. Example: Trillium flore pleno.



## PEST OF THE MONTH

### Earwigs

Too bad gardening isn't just about picking plants, watering and keeping on top of weeding. It seems that on top of all the hours of digging, pulling, and heaving bags of soil, we have to also be pest and plant disease detectives. With mother nature tipping the balance in favor of pests and disease this year, I have had a lot of learning to do!

In trying to organize the information I have been gleaning from the piles of garden pest books Bob has at the store, and countless internet searches on possible causes of the various leaf samples people have brought in over the past few months, I have started to categorize plant problems. One such category is 'holes in leaves'. Though a rather large category, holes usually indicate the presence of a 'chewing' insect (vs. sucking insect or fungal disease). Of course there are many chewing insects, and in this article I wanted to focus on the **European Earwig**: a fairly prominent omnivore that is chewing its way through many vegetable and flower patches this time of year.

Most people associate earwigs with ear drum destroying, brain eating reputation. However, contrary to popular belief, earwigs do not generally prefer to inhabit or forage in human ear canals. Indeed, when earwig populations are under control they are quite beneficial to have around, as they will feed on other garden pests (usually sucking insects such as aphids) and are also very good at decomposing material. However, as their numbers rise (or their source of food declines), so does their peskiness.

#### **Some annoying earwig habits:**

- chewing ragged holes in flower petals, new leaves and tender skinned ripe fruit (holes are small, and grow in size as leaf matures)
- sneaking into homes through small cracks and doorways as the weather cools
- falling out of cut flowers and heads of broccoli when you're entertaining guests (and showing off your garden bounty)

#### **How to identify earwig damage:**

Earwigs are the culprit if you observe small ragged holes with tiny black dots (earwig excrement) on the leaves or petals. Be especially suspicious if damage is limited to new growth and ripe fruit. Once you've identified earwigs as a possible culprit, the only guaranteed way to determine if they are the cause of your garden troubles, is to go out with a flashlight and poke around your damaged plants at night.

#### **How to eliminate earwigs:**

- traps: create a hiding space for earwigs to escape daylight (rolled up newspaper, sections of an old hose). Collect traps in daylight and shake the earwigs out into a bucket of soapy water to drown them. After about one week of doing this, you will have removed the 'excess' population members.
- diatomaceous earth: if earwigs are crawling into your house, sprinkling diatomaceous earth in the cracks or windowsill that they are using as an entrance point will help keep them out.

#### **Possible causes of new earwig damage:**

- elimination of earwig food: If you recently cleared mulch from your garden bed, or eliminated another insect colony (ants, aphids etc.), you may have unknowingly eliminated the earwigs' original diet.
- interruption of healthy balance of ecosystem: Earwigs are usually the first to bounce back after toxification of a garden. If an insecticide application has eliminated all insects from a certain area, earwigs will colonize all the other insect niches. When this newly enlarged population runs out of food, they will eat your plants.

There is tons more to say about earwigs (did you know that female earwigs care for their eggs and young until the nymphs are able to forage for themselves?), however they pertain less to gardening and more to random entomology knowledge. I hope I have shed some insight onto a common and yet frequently overlooked garden pest.



### **Gardeners, I think, dream bigger dreams than Emperor's. -Mary Cantwell**

August is always an in between time for gardeners. There isn't much that really needs to be done now although you can still add the odd plant. The bulbs are coming which is pretty exciting but not until the end of the month. So, take this time to visit some other gardens, be inspired and get ready for the fall planting season. And, don't forget to relax in your own garden, have friends over for a BBQ to show off what you've created and just enjoy.

Happy Gardening!

Bob



Rudbeckia Goldsturm