

THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

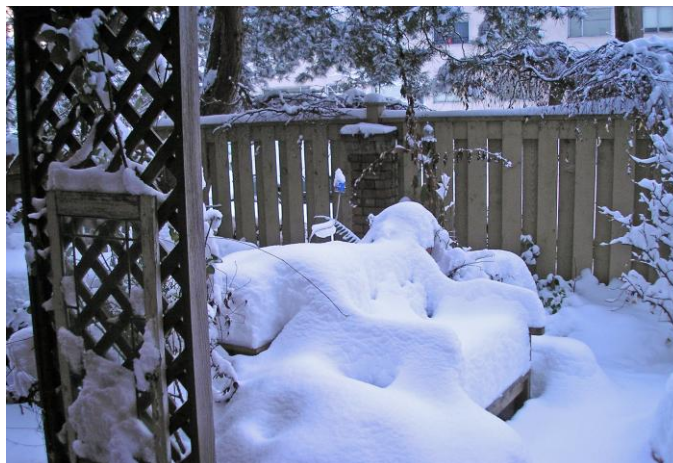
Happy New Year! I hope you had a great holiday season. Now, let's start thinking about 2012 and all the exciting gardening opportunities that lie ahead. There will be new plants to lust over, changes to make in the garden and new gardening ideas to explore. I always get very excited at this time of year because the possibilities seem endless and I am ever hopeful that the weather will cooperate and it will be a perfect gardening season. After the last 3 springs and the lousy weather they had, the spring of 2012 just has to be a good one. Don't you think? For my garden it is unfortunately going to be a bit of a trial this year. My condo building is going to replace all the balconies this year, it's nearly 40 years old so it's about time. I am on the ground floor so nothing is being removed from my deck BUT the scaffolding for the building will be set up on all the ground floor patios. That is going to mean I have to take down my arbour and move nearly 150 pots & planters to.....? Well, I'm not sure yet. I'll let you know how things go.

I like to do a synopsis of the weather for each year and 2011 was certainly a challenging one for gardeners. During the winter it never did get quite as cold as they kept saying it was going to get although we did have a week or so of around -10C. Then as the much anticipated spring started approaching it stayed cool and started to rain. And it rained. And it rained. And it stayed cool. In May, it rained every single weekend. As this is the busiest month of the year at The Natural Gardener you can imagine how that impacted business. And as June approached it continued to rain, not heavily necessarily, but frequently and that continued right through June and into July. I went to Kauai for the last two weeks of July and I'm glad I did. In Vancouver it stayed cool and moist almost until I returned from 2 glorious weeks in paradise. Then the beginning of August the weather changed and it was hot and sunny. For 4 weeks and then summer was over. The fall however was actually pretty nice. Not as much rain as we usually get and it's been cool but not cold. Here's hoping the rest of winter temperatures stay fairly moderate.

In this issue I will be talking about New Plant Temptations, my Favourite Plants of 2011, the Plant of the Month, Seeds, Grafted Tomatoes, a January OPEN HOUSE and of course the To Do List.

Enjoy!

Bob



My garden a couple of years ago.
Let's hope that doesn't happen this year.

JANUARY TO-DO-LIST

This is definitely the quietest time of the year for gardeners. However, there are still a few things you can do:

- Spend some time going over the seed catalogues you ordered in December and order your seeds or come by The Natural Gardener and pick up your favourite seeds there.
- If your seeds arrive before the end of January you can sow them.
- Plant fruit trees
- Plant trees, shrubs and vines as long as the ground isn't frozen.
- Plant perennials.
- Apply dormant spray to fruit trees.
- Draw up a plan of your garden and mark on it any changes you would like to make, either plant wise or with your hardscaping.
- Make a list of plants you would like this year. You can pre-order with The Natural Gardener if you like.
- Make sure that any leaves or broken branches are off the lawn.
- Prune out any broken or damaged branches

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy. ~William Blake

Botanical Garden & Garden Club Discount

This is a reminder that if you belong to Van Dusen Botanical Gardens, UBC Botanical Gardens or are a member of a garden club you will receive 10% off any of your purchases. Just let us know and we will be more than happy to take the discount off for you.

BOTANICAL LATIN

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

SCANDENS – meaning climbing or sprawling. Example: Cobaea scandens (koe-BAY-ah SKAN-denz)

I have been writing a garden blog and wanted to remind you to check it out at blog.thenaturalgardener.com



We are also on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/thenaturalgardener). You can find us at The Natural Gardener Garden Store.

The Natural Gardener now has a website for those of you with smartphones like the I Phone or Blackberry. The website is structured for ease of use on your smartphone. Check it out when you have a chance:

www.thenaturalgardener.mobi

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Phlox paniculata 'David's Lavender'

Phlox is one of those old fashioned garden plants that are always in demand and it's understandable why. They are tough, reliable plants that cover themselves in blooms from mid to late summer. The one problem they can have is powdery mildew. However that problem seemed to be rectified by the cultivar 'David'. It is a white flowering phlox with great disease resistance especially to powdery mildew. What's so exciting about **'David's Lavender'** is that it is a sport of Phlox 'David' and has maintained the disease resistance and hardiness. The bonus is that it has large heads of lavender flowers. In addition the bright green foliage and its hardiness make it a beautiful plant in the garden even when it is not in bloom. David's Lavender grows well in full sun to part shade and in moist but well drained soil. Once it is established it is also quite drought tolerant. Keep an eye out here at the nursery for Phlox 'David's Lavender'. It should be arriving around April.

Zone: 4

Light: Full sun to part shade

Soil: Moist, well-drained

Height: 3 feet (90cm)

Spread: 2 feet (60cm)



The colour of springtime is in the flowers, the color of winter is in the imagination. ~Terri Guillemets

NEW TEMPTATIONS

It's funny but even after 9 years I still get excited about the new plants I will be bringing into the nursery each spring. I guess that just confirms my plant addiction. For 2012 I have some plants that are new to me but not necessarily new to the industry and then I have some that are new to the industry. All of them are interesting and will definitely add a bit of the WOW factor to your garden. Here are a few of them:

Exochorda 'Snowday Surprise'



Pearl Bush is the common name for this shrub and it has actually been around for awhile. However this is a brand new cultivar of it that is more upright & compact in behaviour. In spring it is covered in pearl like buds that eventually open up into lovely white flowers. 4 feet high and wide.

Arctostaphylos edmundsii 'Bert Johnson'



This is a low growing Manzanita reaching a height of 10 inches and a spread of 6 feet. In spring the new growth is a bronzy colour and the flowers are a pinkish white. Needs lots of sun and good drainage but it sure is lovely in the right spot.

Tiareella 'Candy Stripe'

There are lots of new tiarella's out there but Candy Stripe is especially lovely. It has a dark stripe down the centre of each leaf lobe and the flower buds are pink opening to white flowers. A perfect plant for the part shade garden.



Rhodohypoxis baurii 'Lily Jean'



Lily Jean is a double flowering, pale pink rhodohypoxis. As with all rhodohypoxis plant in well drained soil but water as usual in the summer and then keep them completely dry in the winter when they are dormant. They do beautifully in containers or in the alpine garden.

Primula belarina 'Cobalt Blue'



Primula 'Cobalt Blue' is probably one of the bluest, double flowering primulas there is. It is long blooming and in the West Coast climate it may bloom right through the summer and into fall.

Mukdenia rossii 'Karasuba'



Karasuba is a deciduous, part shade ground cover with fan like leaves and white flowers. The photo shows the plant in the fall when the leaves turn this beautiful bronzy red. Stunning!

Prunella grandiflora 'Freelander Blue'



Prunella is another one of those plants that should be more available in the trade. It has gorgeous blue flowers all summer long and is compact enough to be the perfect choice for the front of the garden bed. It reaches a height of 10 inches and spread of 2 feet and prefers full sun to part shade.

Ceratostigma willmottianum 'My Love'



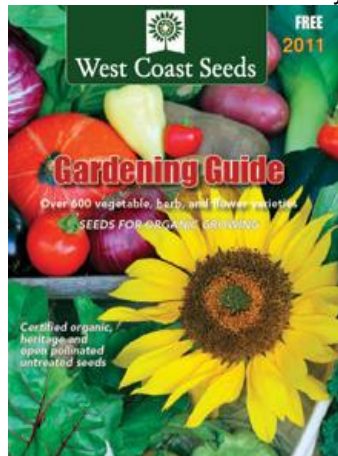
This is a gorgeous plumbago with its golden yellow foliage and brilliant blue flowers that appear from late summer into the fall. It does best in full shade to part shade and with its golden foliage it will really pop in the garden. It gets to a height of 18 inches and a spread of 2 feet. While it looks great in the garden it is stunning in a container.

SEEDS

The Natural Gardener will continue with its expanded selection of **West Coast Seeds** in addition to once again carrying **Stellar Organic Seeds** and **Rene's Garden Seeds**. If there are seeds you are looking for and we don't have them let us know and we will do our very best to bring them in for you.

West Coast Seeds

With their new, colourful packaging and excellent quality these are the seeds to get for all your vegetable and herb needs. The seeds offered have all been trialed here on the coast to make sure they grow and thrive in our West Coast climate. West Coast Seeds has also expanded its offering of Organic Seeds. The free catalogues are now in so come by and pick one up. The seeds should be arriving by the end of the first week in January.

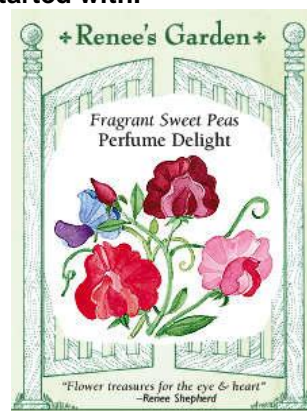


Stellar Organic Seeds

Now based in Johnson's Landing on beautiful Kootenay Lake, BC, Stellar Seeds are the best supplier of organic seeds for the vegetable gardener. The selection is a bit limited but the seeds available are of the highest quality and are grown in the interior of BC. All their seeds are GMO Free and Open Pollinated. The seeds should be here by the 2nd week in January.

Rene's Garden Seeds

Rene's Garden Seeds is located in Felton, California and they offer a high quality, high germinating selection of flower and herb seeds. **The seeds arrived on January 4th so we have a great selection for you to get started with.**



Bob's Favourites for 2011

As many of you know there are very few plants that I don't like and appreciate which always makes narrowing them down to my favourites difficult. However there were some plants that really caught my attention this past year. When choosing my favourites I look at several characteristics. First, is the foliage interesting, are the flowers, if any, long-lasting, fragrant and beautiful. Is it hardy here (although I really am in zonal denial so this category is a bit more problematic). Finally, does it combine well with other plants in the garden? In other words, it better not take over entire sections of the garden or inhibit the growth of the plants around it. There are some great plants that made it onto the list this year so in no particular order here are my favourites for 2011

Thalictrum ichangense 'Evening Star'



Originally from China this small, woodland treasure makes an exquisite addition to your shade garden. The dark olive green leaves, each highlighted by a lovely pattern of silver veins and topped from spring until fall with 15" tall sprays of tiny mauvy-lavender flowers make this a plant everyone should have. I should know, I have a couple of them.

Dwarf Conifers



Thuja plicata 'Whipcord' for example

I know this isn't one plant but the Dwarf Conifers have made a big splash in the last couple of years in know small part due to the

enthusiasm of Lisa O'Donnell. These little treasures are invaluable in the garden for adding structure and interest all year round but especially in the winter. There is bound to be one of these cuties for any garden situation so I recommend taking advantage of them.

Sanicula caerulea



Sanicula caerulea is a recent introduction from Sichuan, China where it grows in moist, woodland settings. This is a real performer in my garden, blooming from mid spring right into mid summer. It has bronzy foliage and clouds of blue flowers. It is a low grower, 8 inches high and about 2 feet in width. It looks wonderful planted amongst Hostas. Mine is partially evergreen as well.

Heptacodium miconioides



I first brought this small tree/large shrub into the nursery 2 years ago and immediately fell in love with it. It has exfoliating bark, fragrant white flowers in September, the calyx turns bright red in the fall and the leaves turn a bronzy purple in the fall. Easy to grow and not susceptible to much in the way of pests or disease this is a must for your small garden. It will only get to a height of 15 feet and you can easily maintain it as a shrub if you prefer. I have one in my 400 sq. foot garden where it fits in beautifully beside my water feature.

Blechnum penna-marina



This is a lovely, little evergreen fern that spreads by rhizomes without being invasive. It is originally from New Zealand, Australia and South America. I have mine planted in a narrow gap between a board and some stones. It has filled in the area beautifully and is spilling over the edges of the stone. It is easy to care for and just requires some easy pulling in the spring to keep it where you want it.

Clematis 'Bijou'



This is a brand new clematis that arrived in the nursery this summer. It is a ground cover clematis rarely getting more than 24 inches high. It blooms from spring through summer with gorgeous, large, purple/blue flowers that cover the plant like a carpet. It is stunning on the edge of a border and even better in a container. In a container I would pair it with a grass such as Miscanthus 'Gold Bar' or with a small shrub or tree like Euonymus 'Green Spire'.

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SUPER NATURALS
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This is the latest innovation in vegetable gardening. There has been a huge increase in the growing of heirloom tomato plants in the last few years but wouldn't it be nice if you could reduce pest and disease problems and increase yields. Now you will be able to with the new grafted tomato plants. Commercial cultivation of grafted vegetable plants began in Korea and Japan at the end of the 1920s. Today, produce growers worldwide are adopting the use of grafted tomato stock, particularly in Asia, Europe, New Zealand and Australia. Grafting vegetable plants, which fuses a desired variety onto special rootstock, helps to ensure huge harvests from healthy plants, whether hybrid or heirloom.

Here are some of the benefits to growing grafted tomatoes:

- Extreme vigor for improved quality and quantity of fruit
- Tolerance to environmental stresses like extreme temperatures or poor soils
- More abundant harvest over a longer period of time
- Resistance to soil borne pathogens and pests
- Increased disease resistance including resistance to early and late blight and blossom end rot

The Natural Gardener will be carrying grafted tomatoes this spring in 1 gallon pots. I will have a list of the varieties I will be carrying in a couple of months. The grower has only a limited number of plants available this year so I will probably sell out early. Because of that I will be taking pre-orders when I get confirmation on the varieties available.

THE NATURAL GARDENER WINTER OPEN HOUSE

January is such a relentlessly dull month I felt that we needed to do something to brighten it up. So, this year I have decided to have a Winter Open House. There will be wine, appetizers, great company and because they are so perfect for the winter garden there will be a fine selection of Hellebores. And most importantly you will receive **10% off** everything in the store and nursery.

See you there!

Date: Saturday, January 14th, 2011

Time: 5pm to 8pm

Location: At The Natural Gardener, 4376 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver

I appreciate the misunderstanding I have had with Nature over my perennial border. I think it is a flower garden; she thinks it is a meadow lacking grass, and tries to correct the error.

Sara Stein

Thank you for taking the time to read this, the first newsletter of 2012. I hope you enjoyed it and I hope we will see you at the Winter Open House on January 14th. Don't forget to take this quiet garden time to reflect on your garden, what you have accomplished and what you would like to accomplish this coming year.

Happy New Year!

Bob



Sir Harold Hillier Winter Garden, Romsey, Hampshire, UK