

THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

This has probably been the nicest June in a long, long time don't you think. We definitely deserved it after the terrible winter and early spring we had. With lots of sunshine, cool evenings and only a little rain it was the perfect environment for gardening. I know all the new plants I added to my garden in June (to replace the ones I lost in the winter) seem to be settling in nicely. Now that July is here I am hoping that the good gardening weather will continue. Because, even though you may think it's too late to add more new plants to your garden it's not. The hot weather hasn't really started yet and with the warm soil and cool evenings the plants suffer less transplant shock and their roots quickly get established. So if you have a few spots that need filling in don't hesitate, get them in. Then, stand back and enjoy what you've created. Have friends over for a BBQ and share your beautiful garden with them. That's really why we do all this hard work isn't it. To share our love of plants with people we care about.

The Natural Gardener is looking for a picture or pictures of your garden. We have a display board in the store where we like to highlight our customer's gardens. It is very inspiring to gardeners to see what other gardeners have done and it gives you a chance to share your expertise with other people. So, send in or drop off a picture and share your garden with us.

In this issue I will be talking about a few more plants for your garden, the Plant of the Month, nematodes for Chafer Beetle, Seductive Succulents, Garden Tours and of course the To Do List.

If you would like to hear about some great native plants for your garden The Natural Gardener, well actually me, will be on Urban Rush on Thursday, July 2nd at 5pm and then repeated at 7pm & 11pm and the next day at noon.

Enjoy!

Bob



A bowl of seductive succulents

THE PLANT OF THE MONTH

Hakonechloa macra aureola – Japanese Forest Grass

Hakonechloa aureola is my favourite of all the grasses and the Perennial Plant Association seems to agree with me, they've named it the Perennial Plant of the Year for 2009. I love it's soft, shimmering look, the way it cascades over containers or onto a pathway and the way it moves in the wind, almost looking like flowing water . In fact at the Elizabeth Miller Garden in Seattle they have used Hakonechloa to simulate a waterfall on a rock face to great effect.

It is a slowly spreading, deciduous grass perfect for brightening up a shady part of the garden. The lovely variegated leaves take on a more lime green colour in the shade and a creamy white colour in full sun. Although it spreads by rhizomes it is not invasive and can be easily kept to the location you want it to be in. They are not prone to much in the way of diseases or pests and once established are fairly drought tolerant. It reaches a height of 2 feet in a couple of years which makes it perfect for container growing, especially as it looks wonderful cascading over the edge of the pot. I have a four foot long rectangular planter filled with Hakonechloa that cascade over the edges beautifully adding a real touch of elegance to my garden.

Because it is so easy to grow, Hakonechloa is considered a low maintenance plant. Basically all you have to do is cut out the old leaves in early spring when you see the new growth starting to emerge from the soil. As an added bonus it is also deer resistant.

Zone: 5

Light: Part shade to full sun

Soil: Loamy, moist

Height: 2 feet

Width: 2 feet but slowly spreads



Hakonechloa macra aureola

A FEW MORE PLANTS FOR YOUR SUMMER GARDEN

Here are some choice plants to finish off your garden for this season. I think you'll like them.

Heucherella 'Sweet Tea'

A choice, new heucherella that combines beautifully with a wide range of plants in your garden. It is undeniably the most intensely coloured heucherella yet with its large cinnamon coloured stars surrounded by orange tea coloured borders. Height to 2 feet and does best in shade to part shade.



Bletilla striata

This wonderful hardy ground orchid is another of those plants that people don't grow enough probably because they hear the word orchid and assume it is difficult to grow. Not true, It does great in a partly shaded area of the garden in regular garden soil. It blooms in late spring to early summer with choice small pink orchid flowers along the flowering stem. It is hardy here but if we get a late frost you may want to protect the newly emerged leaves. Height & spread to 1 1/2 feet.



Geranium 'Ballerina'

I like geraniums but they do annoy me after a while as they flop all over the place. Ballerina on the other hand is a small, trailing geranium that is perfect on a rock wall, container or the edge of a border. The soft-pink flowers have a deep purple eye and veins, appearing on and off from early summer. Shear plants by half in midsummer if flowering stops, to encourage bushy growth and repeat blooming in autumn. It gets to a height of 8 inches and a spread of 18 inches.



Agave 'Spot'

'Spot' boasts the most distinctive spots of any Agave. The deep maroon, glossy dark green pattern emerges on succulent leaves spiralling from a center bud. Fragrant 1-inch flowers top tall 14-inch spikes, completing the stunning show. Requires excellent drainage and dry heat for best performance.



THE EUROPEAN CHAFER BEETLE

I know I have mentioned this before but it bears repeating as I have been hearing that the Chafer beetle is now in the Kerrisdale area. This is the month to apply the nematodes that will control the beetle.

The European chafer, *Rhizotrogus majalis* is a beetle that has been introduced into Canada, and which has few natural predators to control it.



European Chafer Grubs

The larval stage of the European chafer is a grub that feeds on the roots of many plants, but prefers the fibrous roots of turf grasses. Grubs have soft, white, C-shaped bodies with tan or brown heads and three pairs of prominent, long legs. The hind part of the body is smooth and shiny with dark body contents showing through the skin.

The adult stage of the European chafer is a beetle that is similar to the June beetle in appearance. Both are brown, but the European chafer is tan or fawn-coloured, and the June beetle is usually dark brown. The June beetle is also more striking in appearance than the European chafer, having a metallic green head and thorax.



European Chafer Adults

The European Chafer Beetle completes its life cycle in one year. The adult chafers swarm in conspicuous mating flights on warm evenings in late June and early July. The beetles fly to tall objects, usually trees or other vertical structures to mate. The adult females then locate nearby lawns to lay their eggs in.

Eggs hatch in late July or early August and the larvae or grubs begin feeding on roots until the ground freezes. In colder climates, the larvae migrate down below the frost-line to overwinter.

From April to mid-May, the larvae migrate close to the soil surface and feed on turf roots. From mid-May to early June, the larvae stop feeding and pupate (undergo metamorphosis), and the adult beetles emerge two weeks later.

One of the best ways to control the European Chafer Beetle is to apply parasitic nematodes to your lawn and garden in the third week of July right after the eggs have hatched. Nematodes are an almost microscopic worm that burrows into the larvae and kills them. I

If you think you have European Chafer Beetle and would like to apply nematodes please call, e-mail or drop by and we will add your name to the "nematode list". We will contact you once they come in.

The above information on European Chafer Beetle comes courtesy of The City of Burnaby.

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant. ~Author Unknown

GARDEN TOURS

TOURS OF THE PRIVATE GARDENS OF CONNIE O'NEIL, CLAUDE LEDOUX & ADRIANNE MICHIELSEN, TERRANCE LITTLE & BEN CLAREMONT AND PETER BARNSDALE

These are four new gardens that I am able to offer you because of the willingness of these six outstanding gardeners to share the beauty of their gardens with you. Each garden is a unique expression of the vision each person had for their garden. They are all different and offer you a chance to be inspired by their vision. These are the last tours of the year so I hope you will be able to make at least one of them.

THE CONNIE O'NEIL AND CLAUDE LEDOUX & ADRIAN MICHIELSEN GARDENS

The Connie O'Neil Garden

Connie's beautiful garden is also located in Burnaby on a small city lot 49' x 95'. That includes the house so you know it's a small area to garden in. Connie is a plant person and has impeccable taste in plants. Her front garden is full on sun and her back garden is full on shade. You will find a delightful array of plants throughout the garden and inspiration galore.

Date: Saturday, July 4, 2009

Time: 11:00am

Location: will be announced just prior to the tour.

The Claude Ledoux & Adrian Michielsen Garden

From Connie's garden we will then travel to the Claude Ledoux & Adrienne Garden. Claude is the Parks Horticultural Manager for the city of New Westminster so you can just imagine what his garden is like. Both the front garden and the back garden are beautifully laid out and full of some of the most interesting plants you'll ever see. The hardscaping Claude and Adrienne have done is also quite something. This is definitely a garden worth travelling to New Westminster for.

Date: Saturday, July 4, 2009

Time: 1:00pm
Location: will be announced just prior to the tour.
Cost: \$15.00 for both gardens

THE TERRANCE LITTLE & BEN CLAREMONT GARDEN

This BC Landscape & Nursery Association Award winning garden was designed & installed by Anne Talbot-Kelly. This project was the final step in a major home renovation that saw a rebirth of a 1928 home. The goal was to integrate two separate buildings with a contemporary, functional, and food-producing garden. Emphasis was placed on saving a heritage apple tree, re-using materials, and adding sustainable gardening practices.

The garden design centered on the largest element – a forty foot, overgrown and neglected apple tree. From there, various garden levels and spaces were created to use every inch of the 33' by 122' foot lot. Many of the original home's elements were incorporated into the garden, including the cement foundation, the home's chimney bricks, as well as old windows, and even the chimney top.

A few of the sustainable elements included, soil amendment (instead of removal), a rainwater collection system, a drainage field, and a green roof. The result is a garden space that stays true to the eco-visionary architect, Glenn Murcutt, who inspired the home renovation. This garden shows how you can transform a completely featureless yard into a warm, welcoming and beautiful garden space.

Date: Wednesday, July 8th, 2009
Time: 6:30pm
Location: will be announced just prior to the tour
Cost: \$15.00

THE PETER BARNSDALE GARDEN

Peter's garden is located in Burnaby in a townhouse. Always an avid gardener he wasn't about to let a small garden area discourage him from creating an oasis to escape to. This is a shade garden and Peter has worked wonders using foliage texture and colour to create a lovely, serene garden both in the front and in the back of his home. His garden was on the Burnaby Garden Tour last year, has been featured in the Burnaby Newleader newspaper and won Best Small Garden 2000 in the Burnaby Gardens contest.

Date: Sunday, July 12
Time: 11 am
Location: will be announced closer to the date
Cost: \$15.00

All of these gardens are very special. I hope you will be able to join us for at least one of them. To book one, two or all of the garden tours please contact us either by phone, e-mail or in person. Don't delay, several of them are almost sold out.

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, *My Weeds*, 1988

SEDUCTIVE SUCCULENTS

Succulents of all types are a wonderful addition to any sunny spot in the garden but I think they really shine in containers. They will happily colonize shallow urns, terracotta pots & bowls, bonsai dishes, bricks and other containers. Let your imagination run wild.

The structure of succulents such as sedums, sempervivums, echeverias and aeoniums really lend themselves to container gardening. It's almost like painting with plants when you arrange them in different combinations in your containers.

Most succulents require two things to do well: lots of sunshine and very well-drained soil. For the soil I recommend using cactus soil and then adding a handful or two of grit to give it the sharp drainage most succulents prefer. Once your succulents are planted I recommend a mulch of gravel on the surface of the soil. It helps with drainage, helps prevent stem rot and it looks great. For the sun you don't have to have a totally sunny, baking hot yard, deck or patio to grow them but do try and find the sunniest spot in your garden for them. I have a mostly shady garden but there is one 3 foot square area on my deck that gets the most sun and that is where I grow a variety of succulents and cacti quite successfully.

Even though these are drought tolerant plants, during the summer they still require regular watering. Make sure that you water them deeply but infrequently. That will promote deep root growth which seems to make for healthier, drought tolerant plants. And if you happen to be away for a couple of weeks you won't be coming home to something brown and crispy.

There are so many types of succulents you can use for your container sometimes it can seem a bit daunting. Don't be intimidated, pick what you like and put them together. I guarantee it will look great.

Here are some pictures to give you an idea of what you can create with succulents:



July Garden To Do List

- Remove faded flowers from perennials after they finish blooming. Deadheading redirects energy towards healthy roots.
- Maintain a 3 to 4 inch mulch layer around trees and shrubs to protect them from mower and weed whacker damage.
- Check plants regularly for insect problems; hand pick or use suitable control measures if found
- Fertilize Miscanthus & Pennisetum grasses
- Consider drip irrigation and/or soaker hoses as efficient watering alternatives
- Prune water sprouts from apple trees
- Water flowerbeds and vegetable gardens deeply. This encourages a deep root system
- Fertilize container plants every two weeks with an organic water-soluble fertilizer solution
- Keep annuals in bloom by deadheading faded flowers
- When your delphiniums finish flowering cut back to the ground to encourage a second blooming
- Water your container plants daily!
- Harvest vegetables and continue sowing lettuce, peas, kale, swiss chard, leeks, beans, carrots and green onions
- To discourage blight never get water on your tomato plants foliage. Make a tent for it that can be opened in the heat and closed in the rain
- Enjoy a glass of tea flavoured with mint, pineapple sage or lemon balm from the garden

The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before.
Vita Sackville-West

That's it for this month. Don't forget to fill in the empty spots in the garden or it will drive you crazy. After you've done that make sure you take time to just sit for a while in your garden and enjoy what you have created. You deserve it.

Happy Gardening!

Bob

