

# THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

I'm hoping that this month the weather finally warms up and there isn't too much rain. We certainly had our fill of rainy, cool weather the second half of May. What that has done in the garden is slow things down a bit and while I am not a big fan of too much rain it has made all the plants look lush and green. Unfortunately the tomatoes and basil have really suffered so if yours aren't looking very good it's probably due to the cool temperatures and the wet. Once it warms up they should be fine.

June is the month when we normally get out in our gardens, finish off the pots and planters and fill in the holes in the garden so we can relax for the rest of the summer. This year, however, with all the wet cool weather now is the time to really get out into your garden and plant, plant, plant. It is definitely **NOT TOO LATE** to be doing all those gardening things you would have normally done in May. In fact, because the soil is so nice and moist it is the perfect time to be planting and transplanting. To help you with that The Natural Gardener has a nursery full of great perennials, annuals, herbs, veggies and some wonderful small trees and shrubs that would be perfect for your garden.

In this issue I will be talking about Summer Annual Containers, It's Not Too Late To Grow Veggies, Great Plants for the Summer Garden, Garden Tours, Gardeners Latin, the Harkaway Botanicals Open House and Sale, the Alpine Garden Club of BC Fall Sale, the Plant of the Month and of course the To Do List.

Enjoy!

Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>  
10am to 4pm

## HARKAWAY BOTANICALS 3rd ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

You are cordially invited to an open house of Harkaway Botanicals unique garden & nursery. Refreshments will be available while you browse for that special plant or two.

Plants will be available for sale courtesy of The Natural Gardener. .

245 Pembina Street, Queensborough, New Westminster

## SUMMER ANNUAL CONTAINER GARDENS

If you are looking for lots of intense colour during the summer there is nothing like summer annuals and more importantly nothing like summer annual containers. Here are a few tips to help you create a show stopping summer annual container.

### Containers:

There are a wide variety of containers to choose from including terra cotta, glazed clay, wood and plastic as well as unconventional containers such as old watering cans, chairs, old shoes. Let your imagination run wild. There are advantages and disadvantages to all these containers. Let's look at them.

### Terra cotta

Advantages:

- Large variety of shapes and sizes
- Inexpensive (usually)
- Porous-allows for good air circulation
- Age well over time giving an interesting patina

Disadvantages:

- Susceptible to frost damage
- Soil dries out quickly
- Fairly heavy
- Crack and chip easily

### Glazed Clay

Advantages:

- Wide variety of colours, patterns and sizes
- Excellent water retention
- Good insulation
- Good for formal settings and as focal points

Disadvantages:

- Expensive
- Heavy
- Chip and break easily
- Easier to over water

### Wood

Advantages:

- If using cedar, stand up well to the elements
- Lighter than clay
- Retains moisture and insulates well
- Versatile, can be made in almost any shape

Disadvantages:

- Don't use pressure treated wood
- Bottoms can rot

### **Plastic**

Advantages:

- Fairly inexpensive
- Easy to clean
- Harder to break
- Non-porous so doesn't dry out as quickly
- Lightweight
- Lots of colours and sizes to choose from

Disadvantages:

- Easier to overwater
- Doesn't insulate well
- Poor quality pots can get brittle with age

### **Unconventional containers**

Things like wheelbarrows, galvanized pans or buckets, old dressers.

If they don't have a hole you can drill one if clay or punch a hole if metal.

If you can't put a hole in then just double pot it making sure the inner pot isn't sitting directly on the bottom and remember to drain the pot after a heavy rain.

Suggested minimum size for a patio container is 12"x12".

If you want to create an aged terra cotta patina on new pots just mix buttermilk with live moss in a blender and paint on outside of pot.

### **Drainage**

Cover the drain hole of your pot with a landscape fabric.

Raise pots off the deck surface with pot feet, pieces of stone or clay

### **Soil**

Use a good, reliable potting soil from your favourite garden store. Never use soil from the garden

To aid in retaining moisture non-toxic water absorbing crystals can be added to the soil. They act like a sponge and hold up to 400 times their weight in water.

### **Planting your container**

Water your plants about an hour before planting

Soak terra cotta pots before using

You can either plant lightly and let the plants fill in or plant heavily and get that full look quickly. It's your choice.

Before planting arrange plants on top of the soil. Move around until you like what you see.

Normally, tall plants in the back or centre of pot. However, let your imagination run wild and plant the way you like.

### **Planting process:**

- Cover drainage hole with landscape fabric
- Fill two thirds with soil
- Remove plant from it's container and place at same depth as it was in it's own pot
- Surround with potting mix. **DO NOT TAMP DOWN!**
- Water well, wait a few minutes and water again

### **Watering**

Have to water regularly

Watering in the morning is preferably as it helps prevent fungal & mildew problems

### **Fertilizing**

Use a liquid or water-soluble organic fertilizer every two weeks for your annual containers. Organic fertilizers, especially in liquid form are an excellent choice. They are long lasting and won't burn plant roots.

### **Pruning**

Pinch out tips on annuals for fuller growth (I know it's hard to do but worth it in the long run) and deadhead regularly to encourage continued blooming

### **Pest control**

Insecticidal soap is good for getting rid of aphids and spider mites

Provide good air circulation to prevent powdery mildew

Check planters on a daily basis for insects and disease. Prompt action will limit the problem

### **Design**

Use your imagination

Create contrasts in colour and texture such as combining dark foliage with chartreuse coloured foliage.

Generally try to use the same type or style of container if you are planting several.

Give some height so everything isn't on the same level.



## PLANTS TO TEMPT AND ENTICE YOU

### **Arisaema fargesii**

As many of you know I love Arisaemas. Fargesii is especially lovely and highly recommended for the woodland garden. It's not inexpensive but worth every penny.



### **Diphylleia cymosa – Umbrella leaf**

Diphylleia is a native of the Eastern US and with its large, umbrella-like leaves forms lovely clumps in the shade/woodland garden. A relative of the podophyllums it provides a subtler look than its cousin. Note the white flowers raised up above the leaf.



### **Saponaria oeymoides – Rock Soapwort**

Rock Soapwort is a vigorous, low creeping plant, useful for spilling down sunny slopes or over rock walls. In late spring a multitude of starry, pink flowers cover the plant. Prune it back hard after flowering to keep it more compact.



### **Nandina Filamentosa**

I've mentioned this small shrub before but it is worth repeating. One of the more unusual nandinas with its small, filamentous leaves. Only reaching 2 feet in height it is wonderful in a container.



**Parochetus communis – Blue Oxalis**

Parochetus is actually not an oxalis at all as its common name suggests but a member of the pea family. This little creeper from the Himalayas covers itself with bright blue pea-like flowers in the spring and later in the season covers the ground with its clover leaf looking leaves.



**Polygonatum ‘Silver Wings’**

Silver Wings is a sweet, dwarf Solomon seal Reaching a height of 12". Its pointed, silver-blue foliage and green tipped creamy flowers are the perfect accompaniment to Hostas.



**Hosta Revolution**

Revolution is a real eye catcher with its creamy white centers that are freckled with green specks with dark green contrasting margins. A medium sized hosta reaching around 20 inches in height and 24 inches in width.



**Bletilla striata “Soryu”**

The Bletilla family of hardy ground orchids create a touch of the exotic in your garden and Soryu certainly ups the ante. It has stunning mauve-blue flowers instead of the usual pink. Amazing!



## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### **Physocarpus opulifolius 'Centre Glow'**

Physocarpus 'Centre Glow' or ninebark has new leaves that unfurl a golden yellow and then mature to a rosy red-burgundy. Clusters of white blooms accompany the dramatic foliage in early summer, followed by bright red seedheads that fade to tan. 'Center Glow' is a fast grower and an ideal candidate for mixed borders or foundation plantings. It grows to 8 to 10 feet tall and almost as wide. In winter, the older stems have attractive peeling bark. I find that cutting it back hard at the end of each year enables you to keep it tidy and as a bonus you get more colourful young foliage. Centre Glow grows best and has the best colour in full sun but it will do fine in part shade. This is the perfect plant to provide you with privacy and interesting foliage. Try one you'll like it.

Zone: 3

Light: Full sun

Soil: Moist, well-drained

Height: 10 feet

Spread: 10 feet



**"The work of a garden bears visible fruits - in a world where most of our labours seem suspiciously meaningless." Pat Brown**

## It's Not Too Late for Veggies!

If you haven't started your veggie garden yet, don't worry, there's still time to enjoy a bountiful harvest and a zero-mile diet. In fact, you'll be happy to find that seeds sown in warm June soil will germinate faster- which means less time staring at a bare patch of soil. Some particularly rewarding seeds to plant include: exotic looking dragon tongue beans, summer scaloppini (patty pan) squash, and beautiful Bright Lights rainbow chard. Salad greens, carrots and beets are also fan favorites. We carry herb seeds from Renee's garden ([www.reneesgarden.com](http://www.reneesgarden.com)), as well as vegetable and herb seeds from West Coast Seeds ([www.westcostseeds.com](http://www.westcostseeds.com)) and Stellar Seeds ([www.stellarseeds.com](http://www.stellarseeds.com)).

There are some limitations to what you can direct seed in June.

Generally, you'll want to transplant starts of fruiting vegetables such as tomatoes, eggplants and peppers. We get new organic and heirloom vegetables starts every week at the Natural Gardener. Come in and get inspired- you might find something pleasing to look at in the garden, that will also provide some nourishment in your kitchen.

For those who are weary of vegetable gardening because of failed previous attempts, the problem may lie in your soil. Leaf crops tend to be heavy nitrogen feeders, while root crops require more phosphorus and potassium. All of these deficiencies can be fixed with organic soil amendments. Your soil pH may also cause lower yields: brassicas (cabbage, brussels sprouts, kale, broccoli) require higher pH (alkaline) soils, while potatoes, blueberries and strawberries prefer acidic conditions. For first time veggie gardeners: if you've mixed in good organic matter (compost or sea soil) into your veggie beds, don't fret too much about soil amendments just yet. Mulching with sea soil two weeks after planting, following plant specific fertilizing needs (usually just after flowering) and a healthy dose of TLC should be all your garden needs to provide a rewarding harvest.

Some fun tips for a delicious vegetable garden:

-plant basil around tomatoes to improve the vigour and taste of your tomatoes. (also convenient for preparing fresh tomato basil pasta sauce)

-some vegetables can still grow without full sun: kale, salad greens, collards and asian greens can do well in dappled sun or semi-shade conditions -copper tape around you garden beds can keep out slugs and snails

This excellent article was written by my new staff member, Emi Do. Please come by some weekend and say hi to her, I know she would love to meet you.

## "Give weeds an inch and they'll take your yard." Author Unknown

### GARDENERS 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:

**COCCINEUS** – meaning scarlet. Example: *Thymus coccineus* or red flowering thyme.

## GARDEN TOURS

I love taking people on garden tours and sharing with them some of my favourite gardens to visit and learn from. Two years ago Bowen Island gardeners hosted the People, Plants and Places tour and after a year off are once again opening their homes and gardens to the public. It is a great tour and one I don't think you will want to miss.

### The Katharine Nicol Garden

The Katharine Nicol Garden's hardscaping was also designed by Ron Rule but the plantings are all Katharine. In addition to her wonderful selection of perennials, trees and shrubs Katharine has also created a kitchen garden that supplies her family with vegetables all summer long.

**Date: Thursday, June 10, 2010**

Time: 6:00pm

Location: will be announced just prior to the tour

Cost: \$15.00

**The tour should last approximately 1 1/2 hours. After the tour complimentary wine and appetizers will be provided for you to enjoy.**

### The Lisa O'Donnell Garden

The Lisa O'Donnell Garden is a plant collectors dream. Lisa has created an amazing collection of plants, trees and shrubs and one of the most extensive collections of dwarf & miniature conifers I've ever seen. Lisa's garden has been featured in several garden magazines during the past few years. Come and be inspired.

**Date: Wednesday, June 16th, 2010**

Time: 6:00 pm

Location: will be announced just prior to the tour

Cost: \$15.00

**The tour should last approximately 1 1/2 hours. After the tour complimentary wine and appetizers will be provided for you to enjoy.**

## 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: Thursday, June 17, 2010**

Time: 6:00pm

Location: will be announced just prior to the tour

Cost: \$15.00

**The tour should last approximately 1 1/2 hours. After the tour complimentary wine and appetizers will be provided for you to enjoy.**

## **THE CLAUDE LEDOUX & ADRIAN MICHIELSEN GARDEN**

### **The Claude Ledoux & Adrian Michielsen Garden**

Claude is the Parks Horticultural Manager for the city of New Westminster so you can just imagine what his garden is like. Located in New Westminster 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 3, 2010**

Time: 1:00pm

Location: will be announced just prior to the tour.

Cost: \$15.00

## **BOWEN ISLAND PEOPLE, PLANTS AND PLACES TOUR**

I've taken a group to Bowen Island for this tour once before and we had a wonderful time visiting the many beautiful homes and gardens on Bowen. This is an all day tour and one you won't soon forget. We will catch the 10:05am ferry and arrive at Bowen Island at 10:25am. Since this is a self guided tour we will start at one end of the island and work our way around. We will be stopping for lunch at Carol Correl's home on Smugglers Cove. Carol will generously be providing fresh made lemonade and a large deck overlooking the Cove where we can enjoy our lunch. In addition to the tour one of our customers, John Lawrence, has very kindly invited us to tour his beautiful garden and orchard. After the tour, for those who would like, we will be having dinner at Tuscany Restaurant and catching the 7:20pm ferry to Horseshoe Bay. Only 12 people can join us so don't wait too long to book.

**Date: Sunday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

Departure Time from The Natural Gardener: 9:00am sharp

Departure Time from Horseshoe Bay: 10:05am

Garden Tour from 10:30am until 4:30pm

Departure Time from Bowen Island if not having dinner: 5:15pm

Departure Time from Bowen Island if having dinner: 7:20pm

Cost: \$45.00 includes Tour cost and Ferry cost. Dinner is at your cost.

This will be a great day so I hope you can join us.

## **WEEKEND GARDEN & WINERY TOUR TO THE OKANGAN**

I am putting the finishing touches on this weekend away garden and winery tour but wanted to give you advance notice. We will head up Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup> and return Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>. We will be staying at The Eldorado Hotel, located on Lake Okanagan. We will visit 4 beautiful Okanagan gardens and 4 wonderful wineries. More details will follow in the July newsletter but if you are interested give me a call.

**Date: September 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

## June Garden “To Do” List

- Keep weeding and deadheading for clean beds and continuous flowers
- Finish planting your summer flowering plants
- Plant succession salad crops of lettuce, kale, spinach, radish in a lightly shaded, cool, moist area of the garden
- Finally, you can remove the dead, brown foliage from your spring bulbs
- Finish planting your hanging baskets, planters and window boxes
- Keep your compost pile well turned to aid in rapid decomposition
- Keep any newly planted trees, shrubs, perennials and roses well watered
- Mow your lawn high to promote vigorous growth that will keep the buttercups at bay. When watering your lawn (only on the days allowed) water deeply. Avoid watering frequently but briefly.
- Pick off any rose leaves with black spot and/or powdery mildew and spray the plant with a baking soda mixture of 1 tablespoon baking soda to 1 gallon of water.
- Take a moment to savour the beauty of your garden (ignore the hundred things that still need to be done)

### THE ALPINE GARDEN CLUB OF BC FALL SALE

The Alpine Garden Club of B.C. will hold its annual Fall Sale **Sunday, September 19, 1:00-4:00**, at Van Dusen Gardens Floral Hall, 37th Ave. at Oak St., Vancouver.

The fall sale offers the opportunity to purchase unique and coveted plants grown by local club members and small B.C. specialty nurseries. A range of native plants and garden selections best suited to the local climate will be available, in addition to less common alpine/rockery plants, perennials, ferns, small shrubs and seedling trees. Expert growers will be on hand for questions and advice. If you love plants this is a great sale to be at.

### There is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather - John Lubbock, Lord Avebury

Whew! That was a lot to cover this issue. Thank you for taking the time to read it. Now, take some time to wander through or sit in your garden and just enjoy. With the warmer weather (hopefully) there is nothing more therapeutic.

Happy Gardening!

Bob