

# THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

This Spring has definitely been one of the longest, coolest, wettest springs in a very long time. It's hard not to get discouraged about gardening when the weather is like this. I haven't been able to spend hardly any time out in my garden because of the cool, wet weather. Normally by now I'm having my dinner out there at least 3 or 4 times a week yet this year I've only been able to do that once. I also have some planting that needs to get done and I've been holding off because the soil is so wet. Having said that, my garden is certainly looking lush this year. It appears that most of the plants that are in the ground already have appreciated all the moisture. I don't think my hostas have ever been so large and all the other plants are growing nicely as well although they are behind in their blooming times.

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 Plants to Tempt and Entice You, Plant of the Month, Keeping Your Annual Containers Looking Great All Summer, Garden Tours, Growing Japanese Maples and of course the To Do List.

Happy Gardening!

Bob



A view of Glen Patterson's Exquisite Garden  
Photo Courtesy of Glen Patterson

## KEEPING YOUR ANNUAL CONTAINERS LOOKING GOOD ALL SUMMER

If you are like me you want to keep your summer annual containers looking great all summer long and into the fall. If you give them a little extra care they can look good right up to frost. Here are a few tips to help you:

1. Aim to maintain even moisture levels. Plants that are drought stressed are more likely to be weaker, produce fewer flowers and start dyeing back sooner. Try to use the largest container for the location because larger containers dry out slower than smaller ones. Line the inside of containers and hanging baskets with plastic. Punch a few holes on the sides of the plastic near the bottom so excess water can drain but a little reservoir remains in the base.
2. Don't let your soil dry out. Once that has happened it is hard to re-hydrate the soil properly further stressing your plants. Once mid summer hits most planters will need to be watered every day and hanging baskets in full sun may need to be watered twice a day.
3. Try to keep from getting water on the plants when watering. This helps to reduce the risk of disease.
4. Feed regularly. Flowering annuals need a lot of nutrients to grow and produce flowers. I recommend feeding with an organic liquid concentrate fertilizer weekly once your plants have become established. You could also mix in an organic slow release fertilizer at the time of planting.
5. Deadhead, Deadhead, Deadhead. By removing spent flowers you prevent your plants from wasting energy trying to produce seed. Instead they will just keep in flowering.
6. Pick off yellowing leaves. These and damaged foliage are more prone to attack by fungal diseases like botrytis.
7. Check regularly for pests like aphids. Usually you can deal with them by squishing them. It's strangely satisfying.
8. Remember that not every plant needs to flower to look great in an annual container. Strobilanthes and Coleus are two great foliage plants for your planter or hanging basket.

This may seem like a lot to do but really it should only take a few minutes of your day (unless you have a lot of containers) and your planters and hanging baskets will still be looking great right into the fall.



## GROWING JAPANESE MAPLES

I have always had a particular soft spot for Japanese Maples. I find them elegant and refined in the garden and many of them have 4 season interest. Not only do they look good spring and summer quite a few of them have spectacular fall foliage colour and many of them have interesting bark as well. They are a very versatile group of trees that grow just as well in a container as in the garden. I have an Acer palmatum 'Bloodgood' that has been in the same pot for 12 years now. It's about 8 feet tall and provides a lovely canopy over my dining area. All I do is keep it well watered and feed it once a month during the spring and summer. I've never repotted it or added any other soil and it is doing fine. That's not to say that if it's possible you shouldn't refresh the soil with Sea Soil or similar, I would if I could, but it is doing fine anyway.

Japanese Maples are a very easy tree to grow and if you provide them with the following short list of requirements you will have a lovely tree for years and years.

1. Dapple or afternoon shade, especially when young
2. Protection from strong winds
3. Well-drained, consistently moist soil
4. Protection from late spring frosts, especially when young

**Dappled or Afternoon Shade** - A mature Japanese Maple thrives in full sun everywhere but the southernmost portions of its hardiness range, but is also happy with a bit more shade. It does need **some** sun for best foliage color, but the amount you give it can vary greatly. If you notice its leaves scorching during the summer, it's probably overexposed to sun. If the fall foliage isn't nearly as dramatic as expected, it may be getting too much shade. (But this could also be an indication of overwatering in late summer and early fall, which will cause the tree to keep producing new green leaves in autumn instead of changing colors as it should.)

If after a year or two your Japanese Maple does not seem to be ideally situated in your garden, don't be afraid to dig up it up and move it. Location is one of the most important factors in growing this tree successfully, so a bit of trial-and-error may be in order. The best time to move the tree is in late summer or early fall, at least a month before the ground freezes. Your Japanese Maple will be very forgiving -- but cut a very wide and deep hole around it and leave as much soil clinging to its roots as you can when you dig it up!

**Protection from Strong Wind** - The foliage of Japanese Maples is quite fragile, drying out quickly in high winds. Of course, this doesn't mean you have to grow the tree in totally enclosed or protected areas. Just make sure it isn't being whipped around by wind on a regular basis, and it will be fine.

**Well-drained, Consistently Moist Soil** - Japanese Maples flourish in any well-drained soil except highly alkaline soil. Many gardeners grow them in acidic conditions, where they pair beautifully with Rhododendrons, Camellias, and Kalmias. But they are also perfectly content in neutral and even mildly alkaline pH.

Japanese Maples are greedy feeders, especially when young. Before planting, work as much compost as you like into the soil around the tree, and keep adding it during spring and early summer. Composted matter not only adds valuable nutrients to the soil, it tends to retain moisture, which Japanese Maples love.

These trees are quite drought-tolerant when mature, but like most young trees, they need regular deep waterings during the first few years. Plan to water heavily twice a week during normal weather and three or even four times weekly in periods of drought. Whether your tree is young or mature, it will grow best in soil kept consistently moist by regular watering and mulching. A 3-inch

layer of shredded bark around the entire root zone of the tree (but not touching the trunk) works well in all seasons.

**To encourage the most spectacular colour show in fall, reduce the amount of water you give your Maple in late summer and early autumn.** Of course, do not let it dry out completely, but cut back so that it stops producing more green leaves and begins its fabulous color changes. You will be amazed at the difference this makes!

**Protection from Late Spring Frosts** - Spring is the season when your Japanese Maple is most prone to damage. It leafs out early -- the first hint of warm weather will cause it to break dormancy. In many climates, there are several frosts in store after that initial warm period, and these can be dangerous, especially to young trees. Keep the tree covered when the forecast calls for frost.

Here are a few of my favourites:

**Acer japonicum var. Aureum**  
**- Golden Full Moon Maple**



This is my favourite Japanese Maple. It is glorious in a partly shaded spot planted against the dark green of a cedar hedge. Susan Koelink has two in here garden that are spectacular. Very slow growing.

**Acer palmatum 'Koto No Ito'**



I first saw this small, exquisite tree in Glen Patterson's roof top garden. Growing no taller than 10 feet it is perfect for small gardens.

**Acer palmatum 'Emperor 1' or 'Red Emperor'**



Emperor 1 is an improved version of 'Bloodgood' with richer, redder leaves that hold their colour all summer and fiery red foliage in the fall. Stunning! It will reach a height of 25' when mature.

**Acer palmatum dissectum 'Waterfall'**



'Waterfall' is a gorgeous, small Japanese Maple reaching 4 feet in height in 10 years. Gold & yellow fall colour.

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### **Iris siberica 'Ruffled Velvet'**

The iris family is one of the few plant families that I can take or leave. Mostly I think because the flowers don't last long enough for me. However, if I have to choose an iris it would always be an *Iris siberica*. They are easy to grow, tolerant of all soil conditions from dry to wet, have attractive, grass-like foliage and the flowers are beautiful. ***Iris siberica* 'Ruffled Velvet'** has an exceptional flower that I absolutely love. The flower is a deep purple with darker purple falls and looks exquisite. It mixes well with other perennials and provides excellent colour and contrast to the perennial border. It is also very effective when planted on a slope or hillside or along a stream or pond. Massed plantings or well-placed specimens can enhance almost any setting, and the foliage provides lasting beauty after it finishes blooming.

Zone: 3

Light: Full sun to part shade

Soil: From boggy to dry

Height: 2 1/2 feet

Width: 2 1/2 feet

Bloom Time: June



## 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)



An example of the beautiful David & Wendy Sellars Garden  
Photo courtesy of Elaine Peterson

**What is one to say about June, the time of perfect young summer, the fulfillment of the promise of the earlier months, and with as yet no sign to remind one that its fresh young beauty will ever fade. - Gertrude Jekyll**

## PLANTS TO TEMPT AND ENTICE YOU

One of the best things I love about having a gardening store is that there are always new plants as well as old favourites becoming available that interest and excite me. Here are a few that I think you may enjoy as much as I do:

### **Lewisia 'Constant Comment'**



This little beauty blooms in late spring and then again throughout the summer. Provide excellent drainage and a sunny location. Mulch it with gravel.

### **Clematis florida sieboldii**



Yes, this is a clematis. It looks a lot like a passion flower doesn't it. It should be hardy here but I don't think it likes the wet so plant it in a well-drained site. It blooms in spring on last years wood and then in summer on new growth. Just prune it to shape.

### **Salvia 'Black and Blue'**



Amazing blue flowers on 4' to 5' stalks. This is the only annual I have put in this column but it is so striking I couldn't leave it out. It will add height, drama and beauty to your garden.

### **Brunnera 'Kings Ransom'**



Brunnera are one of my favourite shade plants and this new introduction is fantastic. It has the silvering of Jack Frost and the cream edges of Hadspen Cream.

**Trillium pusillum**



This is a dwarf trillium from the Eastern US. It eventually reaches a height of about 1 foot. It is a lovely addition to your trillium collection.

**Hosta 'Fire & Ice'**



A beautifully variegated sport of Hosta 'Patriot'. I love the creamy variegation, it lights up any shade garden.

**Saxifraga 'Winifred Bevington'**



I have become quite fond of the "Sax's". A lot of them are low, mounding plants with very pretty flowers in spring. Winifred Bevington is located in the centre of this photo. Will do fine in part shade.

**Verbena 'Homestead Purple'**



This sprawling, low growing perennial adds masses of colour to the front of your border. It loves the sun and will bloom practically non-stop all summer.

**Cardiocrinum giganteum**



I've talked about this amazing plant before but it bears repeating. It is one of the most striking plants you can have in your woodland garden. When it blooms, after growing for 6-7 years, the flower spikes can be up to 7 feet tall and festooned with large, white, fragrant flowers. After blooming the parent plant dies but before that it produces 'pups' that will grow and bloom for you in a couple of years. You really should try this one.

## **GARDEN TOURS 2011**

I love taking people on garden tours and sharing with them some of my favourite gardens to visit and learn from. This year I have the great good fortune to be adding some new gardens to my already wonderful regularly visited gardens. We will be visiting Dorina Palmer's amazing Point Grey Road garden, Margot Ketchum's fascinating and beautiful West Vancouver garden and David & Wendy Sellar's beautiful rock & alpine garden in South Surrey. In addition I am very fortunate to have booked a date to see the stunning Elizabeth Miller Garden in Seattle. It's been a couple of years since we were last there and I'm very excited to be returning there this year. There is a new addition to the tour. We are going to be going to Bowen Island to visit the gardens of John & Katherine Lawrence and Barbara Reid in June. You won't want to miss that one.

### **Abkhazi Garden and Lily Maxwell Garden**

We will be visiting two of Victoria's most beautiful gardens this year. The Abkhazi Garden is located a short distance from Government House in Victoria and the Lily Maxwell garden is a private garden located down from the Abkhazi Garden close to the water. Here is a description of the two gardens:

#### **Abkhazi Garden**

The Abkhazi Garden is an exquisite heritage home and garden. Prince and Princess Abkhazi began creating their garden in 1946. This was the year they married and settled in Victoria, after living separate lives touched by both privilege and tragedy. They immediately began to develop their one-acre property, and continued to maintain and improve the garden throughout their lives together.

The garden is very discreet from the street, with only hints of what exists beyond the hornbeam hedge. What the visitor does find is a garden that embraces a natural landscape that is unique to Victoria. The garden is blessed with dramatic glaciated rocky slopes, magnificent native Garry oaks and gorgeous vistas. The garden is designed to make the most of these remarkable features and it is the Abkhazis' response to their landscape that qualifies it as a stunning example of West Coast design. The garden flows around the rock, taking advantage of deeper pockets of soil for conifers, Japanese maples and rhododendrons that over the last 50 years have grown to an impressive maturity. Carpets of naturalized bulbs, choice alpines and woodland companions provide interest throughout the year to the discerning plantsman, but it is the overall design that leaves the greatest impression.

The Abkhazis worked together on their creation for over 40 years, referring to it as "their child". After their deaths the Garden changed hands, and in February 2000, The Land Conservancy purchased the property to save it from becoming a townhouse development.

I have had the privilege of visiting this garden several times and it is a real joy to explore. They have rhododendrons that are nearly 100 years old and are more tree-like than shrubby. It was a unique experience to wander among them. This is definitely a must see garden. Please visit their website <http://www.conservancy.bc.ca/content.asp?sectionack=abkhazi> for more detailed information about the garden.

#### **Lily Maxwell Garden**

Lily Maxwell is a Garden Designer with a beautiful home and garden located in the Oak Bay area of Victoria. Lily's property slowly slopes down to the road in front of her house and commands a lovely view of the water. But it is the plants that draw your attention. In the front yard she has created sweeping garden beds anchored with shrubs and trees and filled with interesting, rare and unusual perennials. The east side of the house has a sweet little garden area that links the front yard to the back. In the back yard, gravel paths meander through the garden beds Lily has created. Here again a variety of trees and shrubs provide structure in the garden with perennials providing colour and interest. Lily's garden is toured by many garden groups throughout the year and you are really going to enjoy seeing what she has created.

**Date: Sunday, June 5, 2011**

Time: We will meet at The Natural Gardener at 7:30am to catch the 9:00am ferry to Swartz Bay arriving at The Abkhazi Gardens at 11:00am. We will leave the Abkhazi Gardens at 12:30pm and tour the Lily Maxwell Garden. From Lily's garden we are going to Richard Mosselman's garden. Richard and his partner have created a wonderful small garden that I know we will all find inspiring. We will catch the 5pm ferry and should be back at The Natural Gardener by 7:30pm

Cost: \$95.00 includes ferry, gas and tours of both gardens.

## **The Lawrence's Garden and Barbara Reid Garden**

### **The Lawrence Garden**

The Lawrence's property is located on the East coast of Bowen Island with views to the North, East and South. Nestled on a 100 ft cliff the house and gardens are exposed to buffeting by winds from the SE and by the cold Squamish winter winds from the North.

The garden extends over two building lots. The development of the garden on the more northerly lot was started in November of 2003. The bigger, more southerly lot, was landscaped in November 2009, after the demolition of a large 10000 ft structure brought to the Island from Expo. The garden you will see on this lot was landscaped over a three-month period in the fall of 2009. The first plantings went into the ground in November 2009.

The entire property with one small exception is unfenced. The Island is currently over-run with deer. All their plantings have to be 'deer resistant,' a term which defies a definitive definition as what might be poison on one side of the Island is lettuce on another!

Water is a scarce resource during the summer months on Bowen. Home consumption is restricted to 140 gallons a day. They currently store 9000 gallons of water and have plans to add more. The newer garden has an irrigation system.

The combined properties extend over three acres. Currently we are developing beach access and rest areas from which visitors can take in the magnificent sweep of the coastal mountains and the wild life of Howe Sound. If you are lucky you may be blessed with a sighting of killer whales, dolphins, or rafts of thousands of scoter and barrow's golden eye ducks!

### **The Barbara Reid Garden**

Barbara Reid's home and garden are located at the very end of Arbutus Point Road on Bowen Island with stunning views of the water. Her garden is a mixture of shade and sun with plant treasures located throughout the garden. It is interesting to see how the garden style changes as you move from shade to sun and back to shade. Because the garden is on an exposed point some of the garden areas have to contain tough plants that can take drought and heat. I think you will find this a fascinating garden to tour through.

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

**Date: Sunday, June 12, 2011**

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

Departure Time from Horseshoe Bay: 10:05am

Arrive at the Lawrence Garden by 11:00am. Tour garden and have lunch on site. Then head off to Barbara Reid's garden.

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.

## The Margot Ketchum Garden – SOLD OUT

A couple of years ago I had the opportunity and great pleasure of visiting Margot's Garden and was blown away by the lushness and richness of her plants. Everywhere I looked there were plant treasures, both big and small. The property, which Margot purchased in the mid 90's was a mess when she first bought it but by sheer hard work and imagination she has transformed it into a garden of Eden. There is a pond in the front yard with a small bridge over it and the backyard is a shade gardeners paradise. Margot's garden has been featured in GardenWise magazine and she gets numerous requests each year to tour her garden. This is another garden you are not going to want to miss.

**Date: Thursday, June 16th, 2011**

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 Lisa O'Donnell Garden – SOLD OUT

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: Thursday, June 23rd, 2011**

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 ELIZABETH MILLAR GARDEN – SOLD OUT

The Miller Botanical Garden is located just north of Seattle. It was the private home and garden of Elizabeth and Pendleton Miller. The garden is known for its exceptional collection of fine trees and shrubs in addition to an expansive collection of woodland herbaceous perennials. The Millers purchased the five-acre piece of land north of the Seattle city limits on a bluff above Puget Sound in 1948. The site commands spectacular views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Peninsula, and offers unique microclimates for growing plants. There are over 4,000 taxa, or different kinds of plants, in the three acres of this uniquely landscaped garden.

The Miller Botanical Garden is still a private garden and is available for tours only on Wednesdays & Thursdays from March until November with a maximum of 500 people each year so I was thrilled to be able to actually book a date and share with you this fascinating and very special garden. For more information on the Miller Botanical Garden please visit their website at [www.millergarden.org](http://www.millergarden.org).

**Date: Wednesday, June 29, 2011**

Depart Vancouver from The Natural Gardener at 8:30 am

Arrive at The Miller Botanical Garden at 12:45 pm

Tour starts at 1:00pm

Tour ends at 3:00pm

Depart for Vancouver at 3:15 pm

Arrive in Vancouver at 7:15 pm

Cost: \$40.00 includes car, gas & tour

## THE CLAUDE LEDOUX & ADRIAN MICHELSEN GARDEN – SOLD OUT

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 Adrian have done is also quite something. This is definitely a garden worth travelling to New Westminster for.

**Date: Saturday, July 9, 2011**

Time: 1:00pm

Location: will be announced just prior to the tour.

Cost: \$15.00



Part of Lily Maxwell's front garden

**Gardening is about enjoying the smell of things growing in the soil, getting dirty without feeling guilty, and generally taking the time to soak up a little peace and serenity. ~Lindley Karstens**

## 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:

**Praecox** – meaning very early. Example: Helleborus niger praecox.

**I have been writing a garden blog and wanted to remind you to check it out at [blog.thenatural-gardener.com](http://blog.thenatural-gardener.com)**



**We are also on . You can find us at The Natural Gardener Garden Store.**

Thank you for taking the time to read this month's newsletter. Remember to get out in your garden and enjoy what you have created. I know I plan on spending Sunday evening just savouring my garden and enjoying the peace it brings to me.

Happy Gardening!

Bob



A peaceful corner of David & Wendy Sellars Garden  
Photo courtesy of Elaine Peterson