

THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

I think this summer has generally been more of a challenge than usual for a lot of gardeners. It was certainly a lot cooler and moister this summer compared to last summer and I've noticed that some plants have done better than others in this weather. Hostas, heuchera, ligularia, ferns and other shade lovers seemed to have thrived on the cooler, wetter weather whereas plants like miscanthus grasses, rudbeckia, echinacea and other heat loving plants that like it hotter and dryer really seemed to struggle for some people. The good thing about this cooler, wetter weather is that it makes it easier to plant new perennials, transplant and/or divide older ones and plant or move shrubs and trees. So you see there is always a silver lining for us gardeners.

Since I have a mostly shade garden it has looked pretty good this year but what I have noticed is that I haven't had nearly as many blooms from my plants as I usually do and some of my sun lovers like my Hedychiums are half the size they were last year. Let me know how your garden fared this summer.

Because it's fall there is always lots to talk about. Spring bulbs are now in so I will be highlighting some of the new ones for this year, I will also be talking about the Plant of the Month, fall planting, reminding you about using nematodes to combat root vine weevil, introducing the fall class schedule and of course there will be the "To Do" list.

Enjoy!

Bob

"There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments." -- Janet Kilburn Phillips



PLANT OF THE MONTH

Abeliophyllum distichum – White Forsythia

White forsythia is an uncommon shrub in the West Coast Garden but is a beautiful compliment to regular forsythia. It is a multi-stemmed, rounded shrub truly beautiful when it is in flower in early spring but then quite unremarkable the rest of the year. It makes a nice filler plant when grown in amongst other shrubs in your garden. White forsythia comes into bloom in February here on the coast, usually just before the regular forsythia. It prefers full sun but will take some light shade and grows well in moist but well-drained soil. Once it becomes established it is drought tolerant.

Prune it immediately after blooming because flower buds for the following year will form on the current year's growth. It needs periodic pruning (at least every 3-4 years) to control and maintain its attractive shape.

Light: Full sun to light shade

Soil: Moist, well-drained

Height: 5 feet

Width: 4 feet



"Gardening is a way of showing that you believe in tomorrow."

FALL CLASSES

Once again The Natural Gardener is offering our popular Fall Garden Classes to help you explore new plant possibilities and to increase your gardening knowledge.

We will be offering classes on everything from Orchid growing to winter container gardening. There are several classes that will be taught by people in the industry who have an incredible wealth of knowledge to share with you. Just take a look at the class list below and decide which one(s) you'd like to take.

All classes are held at The Natural Gardener Garden Store, 4376 West 10th Avenue, begin at 7PM and are limited to 15 people.

You must pre-register for a class either in person, by phone or by e-mail. When phoning or e-mailing, a credit card number is required.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to call the store at 604-224-2207 or e-mail us at info@thenaturalgardener.com.

THE NATURAL GARDENER GARDEN CLASSES SCHEDULE

FALL 2007

September 20

Spring Bulb Planter

Instructor: **Bob Tuckey**, owner of The Natural Gardener

- I'll be talking about the wonderful varieties of bulbs available to you this year, where to plant them and how to plant them. Then we will plant a "lasagne" pot that will bring you several months of continuous colour next spring. Lasagne pots are planters that you plant with a succession of bulbs so that you will have a colourful display from February to May. I'll supply the bulbs and you bring a 12"-14" oval, round or square planter.

Cost: \$50.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

September 27

Must Haves and Fantastic Foliage!

Instructor: **Lyle Courtice**, owner of Harkaway Botanicals

- Lyle is a trained Horticultural Technician, Landscape Designer and the owner of Harkaway Botanicals. He will be giving a fun, informative talk on what's new and notable in the gardening world. As he says "let's take a walk down the garden path and see what should be in your garden". Plus, fantastic foliar selections for your planters and garden beds; flowers are not the only things that can WOW the eye. This is going to be a great evening; you are not going to want to miss this class. We will be having a free draw for one of the fantastic foliar plants Lyle will be talking about.

Cost: \$20.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

October 4

Winter Container Gardens

Guest Instructor: **John Cowie**, Horticulturalist

- John is back for another fun-filled and informative evening of container gardening. He will look at which plants to use, different plant combinations and what the special needs are of a winter container garden. Then you will make a container garden to take home. I'll supply the plants and you bring along a 12"-14" oval, round or square planter.

Cost: \$50.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

October 18

Growing Orchids at Home

Guest Instructor: **Norm Dorosh**, Owner of Somerville Orchids

- Norm is one of the best private orchid growers in the Lower Mainland and he will be sharing his knowledge about the more common species of orchids grown indoors, their light requirements, type of soil, watering, fertilizing, re-potting and how to get them to re-flower. This is a fun, informative class I know you will enjoy. If you have an orchid that you'd like us to look at bring it along. There will be a free draw for one of Norms spectacular orchid flower arrangements at the end of the class.
Cost: \$20.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

October 25

Using Beneficial Insects, Companion Plants and Integrated Pest Management for Pest Control In Your Garden

Instructor: **Bob Tuckey**, owner of The Natural Gardener

- With a greater understanding of how harmful pesticides are for your garden and the environment people want to use other ways of controlling pests in their gardens. I will be speaking about the different types of beneficial insects for the garden, companion planting to control pests and Integrated Pest Management for your garden.
Cost: \$15.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

November 10

Indoor Plants: The garden inside.

Instructor: **Bob Tuckey**, owner of The Natural Gardener

- Indoor plants help us get through the cold winter months when we can't be out in the garden. I'll be talking about some of the different indoor plants that are available and their care, including light, moisture, fertilizer, pest control and even how to get those darn poinsettias to re-bloom for you next year.
Cost: \$15.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

BENEFICIAL NEMATODES

I know I bring nematodes up a lot but they are one of the most effective ways of controlling root vine weevil and cutworms. So, once again here is everything you wanted to know about nematodes.

Nematodes are microscopic round worms that feed and reproduce on a multitude of insect pests. Susceptible pests or hosts must be in the larva or grub stage for the nematodes to effectively parasitize. As a parasite, the nematode enters the grub through any available opening such as the mouth or anus. Once inside, eggs are laid and a bacteria is released by the nematode to initiate decomposition of the grub which provides a food source to the developing young.

Now is the time to apply these very useful biological predators to combat black vine weevil. The larvae are still quite small at this time of the year and are easily attacked by the nematodes. To ensure even better control it is recommended that another application of nematodes be done between April and June depending on the weather.



Beneficial nematodes under the microscope



black vine weevil



black vine weevil larvae

"An addiction to gardening is not all bad when you consider all the other choices in life."

SEPTEMBER TO DO LIST

- Set out transplants of cool-weather vegetables
- Prune cane fruits such as raspberries and blackberries
- Plant winter pansies and fall annuals (calendula, dianthus, ornamental cabbage and kale)
- Plant peonies
- Plant fall-blooming bulbs amongst the fall perennials in your window boxes & planters and in drifts in your garden beds
- Continue to harvest herbs and flowers for drying
- Divide peonies. Be sure to have 3-5 eyes per division. Plant with eyes no deeper than 2 inches below the soil
- Divide bearded iris and other spring- and summer-blooming perennials
- Plant bare-root trees and shrubs
- Plant herbs and groundcovers as the weather cools
- Over-seed lawns that are patchy from the summer
- Lay down turf for new lawns
- Fertilize your lawn in early September. This is the most important application of the year
- Apply beneficial nematodes to combat Root Vine Weevil and cutworms

"Gardening requires lots of water, most of it in the form of perspiration." --Lou Erickson

SPRING BULBS

This fall The Natural Gardener has an excellent assortment of spring bulbs for you to choose from. Please come by and check out our full selection.

Here are just a few of my favourites this year:

Colchicum – Autumn Crocus



Chionodoxa Alba



Fritillaria meleagris



Allium schubertii



Allium Bulgaricum



Tulip Peach Blossom



Eremurus robustus – Fox Tail Lily



Tulip Synaeda King



Hyacinth Apricot Passion



Tulip Rembrandt Mix



Narcissus Poeticus recurvus



Narcissus Tahiti



Narcissus Accent



Fall is a great time to plant perennials because...

- ~ The soil temperature is warmer in fall than it is in spring. Warm soil promotes fast, strong root growth.
- ~ The shorter days and cooler temperatures of fall reduces the severity and length of transplant shock.
- ~ Since many insects are going dormant for the season, fall planting reduces the risk of insect attack and plant damage.
- ~ Fall planting reduces the load of springtime gardening chores. Many people have more time to plant perennials in September than in May.

PLANTING PERENNIALS in the FALL

It's certainly possible to keep planting perennials well into the fall. Here are a few ideas for ensuring better success when planting during this cool time of the year.

- Add plenty of organic matter to the bed, which improves soil drainage and at the same time improves moisture retention so plants don't dry out so quickly. Two inches of compost or moistened peat moss dug in to a depth of 6 to 8 inches will help immensely.
- Newly planted perennials will need regular watering, even in the fall. Watch for signs of wilting and water as soon as possible. Aim for a deep watering once a week rather than sprinkling lightly every few days. Watering by hand is fine, or use a well-aimed sprinkler or soaker hose. One inch of water per week should keep most newly planted perennials happy. This is easy to measure by placing an empty tuna can or margarine container in the sprinkler path and timing how long it takes to fill to one inch deep with water.
- Try to get perennials planted at least four weeks before the ground freezes hard in your region. For Vancouver that means you should be able to plant right up to the beginning of December. This should give most types plenty of time to get themselves rooted in before winter.
- Mulching around newly planted perennials helps to conserve moisture and will protect their roots. It also reduces the task of weeding. Some examples are shredded bark, pine nuggets, bagged compost or composted manure.
- Mulch should be no deeper than two inches. A really simple way to apply mulch over a new perennial planting is to turn pots upside-down over your plants, spread the mulch then just remove the pots. Mulch should taper down to nothing the closer you get to the stems or crowns of your perennials. When deep mulch is in direct contact with perennial stems, various rots and fungus problems can develop and these may actually kill or damage your plants.
- When buying bargain perennials that are tall and spindly or floppy, it's often best to prune the plants back by at least half at planting time. They will grow new foliage and establish quickly. Aside from Peonies and true Lilies, most other perennials respond very well to pruning.
- A root-stimulating fertilizer may be helpful. A liquid organic fertilizer such as Raingrow Bloom-A-Long works well.

Perennials (and shrubs) are often rootbound in their containers by late summer or fall. Your plants will establish more quickly and be healthier if you damage the rootball slightly before planting. Use an old kitchen knife and slice an X across the bottom of the rootball to a depth of about one inch. Spread this cut open a little and shove in a stone or handful of soil to keep it open. Larger plants might need some scoring along the sides of the rootball. This does damage the roots slightly, but during the repair process the new little roots quickly discover the garden soil and they grow out into it within a couple of weeks. If you don't do this important planting step your perennials might stay rootbound for a year or more!

Well, this newsletter should help you make a start in your fall garden activities. Just remember to take the time to enjoy the changes that are happening in your garden right now, September can be a beautiful month to be out in your garden.

"There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments." -- Janet Kilburn Phillips

Happy Gardening!

Bob



Belgian Mum with a Croton in the background