

THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Wasn't it wonderful that summer finally arrived, in August. Better late than never and actually the weather was perfect. Warm but not too hot and it cooled down in the evenings which made sleeping nice and comfortable. The gardens loved it. The weather was actually perfect for growing and it showed in how well everyone's gardens seemed to do. Even the vegetable growers, who got off to a shaky start because of all the cool, wet weather earlier in the season, ended up doing great. Lettuce, spinach, kale, onions, potatoes and carrots all seemed to grow well and even the tomatoes have ended up producing well.

September is bulb month so it's time to start thinking about what kind of bulbs and how many of each you would like to plant this year. Remember, bulbs always look better planted in groups and drifts rather than scattered singly around the garden so take that into consideration when deciding what and how many to grow. It's also not too early to plant your bulbs in September. It's actually a good thing to do because it allows the bulbs to develop a really good, strong root system before the cold arrives. Strong root growth translates into stronger, bigger flowers next spring. The Natural Gardener has a really fine selection of spring bulbs this year so do come by and have a look.

In this issue of the newsletter I will be talking about Winter Heather, Fall Planting, Winter Kale, Growing Spring Flowering Bulbs, Part Sun vs. Part Shade, A Special on Cast Art Planters and of course the To Do List.

Enjoy!

Bob



Gorgeous tulips in Dorina Palmers garden
Photo courtesy of Elaine Peterson

HEATHER (*Calluna vulgaris*)

One of the best plants to use in the fall/winter garden is *Calluna vulgaris*. It is especially attractive in fall/winter containers as many of the heathers hold their flowers over the winter. *Calluna vulgaris* is also known as Ling or "Scotch" heather. These are the true heathers, among the hardiest and most varied of all hardy heathers. Sizes range from small tufts, mounds and carpeters to shrubs about three feet tall. Flowers can be single or double. There are even bud bloomers who hang onto their flowers through winter and look as if they are still in bloom. The bud bloomers are my favourite heathers and that is what The Natural Gardener carries. There are also many interesting foliage colours. Some turn spectacular shades of orange and red during the cold weather of winter. The varieties that show coloured spring new growth are valuable for their several months of extremely showy foliage from January to June, and then they go on to bloom for an additional several months.

Callunas grow and flower best in full sun but can tolerate partial shade. The heathers with the coloured foliage need bright winter sun to turn those intense shades of orange or red. Some experts recommend pruning the Callunas with spring coloured tips in the fall so you get to enjoy the new growth without pruning it off.

Good drainage is very important. They are liable to get root diseases if grown in wet spots. Callunas thrive on acidic soils which makes them a perfect plant for the Lower Mainland. All Callunas but the most compact miniatures need annual pruning or plants will become straggly and unsightly. Prune the stems below the flowers after flowering in fall or in early spring in colder climates.

The Natural Gardener is bringing in a selection of heathers for you to plant in your containers or gardens this month. Here is who will be available:



Calluna "Purple"



Calluna "Red"



Calluna "Salena"



Calluna "Valentina"

"But now in September the garden has cooled, and with it my possessiveness. The sun warms my back instead of beating on my head ..." - Robert Finch

FALL PLANTING

For the past several years I've talked about Fall Planting but I thought I would bring it up again because Fall really is a great time to plant.

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, 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.

WINTER KALE

Winter kale is one of those favourites of the fall garden that just keeps getting better as the fall progresses. In fact once frost hits, the colours in the kale are actually more vivid. They are easy to grow and easy to look after. One of the benefits to growing them in the fall is that they are much less bothered by pests although you will have to keep a look out for slugs & snails.

Winter kale is a great plant to use in containers or window boxes. When they are grown in six or seven inch pots, it is easy to move them from one area to another for seasonal color. For example, one week they can be used in the entry area; another week they can brighten the patio or deck. They are also colourful in low rockeries or rockery outcroppings. Actually, they will thrive in a sunny or semi-shaded spot anywhere in the garden.

The plants grow about a foot and a half to two feet high under normal growing conditions. For best display, plants should be set about twelve to eighteen inches apart. If planting in a container regular potting soil is fine and in the garden nothing special needs to be added to the soil for them to do well. However I would recommend adding some organic bone meal to the planting hole for that little added burst of nutrition. They thrive in full sun to part shade but I find they are less leggy in full sun. Speaking of leggy, by mid winter they are looking pretty spindly but you can mound soil up around the stem if you find that they are starting to look a bit unsightly.

Take time out this fall to become acquainted with the showy flowering kale. It is a great plant to add colour to your garden during the fall and early winter months.



GROWING SPRING FLOWERING BULBS

Every September I hum and ha about planting tulips, daffodils, crocus and the rest of the spring flowering bulbs. Eventually I succumb to their tantalizing potential, plant several containers worth and am so happy in the spring when they magically appear. That's the thing about bulbs, they are so unattractive as bulbs it's hard to get excited about them. But then I remember how great they looked last spring when I was craving some colour in the garden and I know I have to plant more of them. And the great thing about bulbs is that they are so easy to plant. Here are a few pointers on planting your spring bulbs:

- Choose healthy bulbs. Avoid bulbs that are dry and withered, spongy or mouldy. In general, the larger the bulb for its type, the more flowers.
- Choose an appropriate location. Most flowering bulbs prefer full sun, but that can be almost anywhere in the spring, before the trees leaf out. So don't overlook a spot that seems perfect, just because it's a bit shady in the fall. Woodland bulbs (Anemone nemorosa (Woodland Anemone), Arisaema (Jack-in-the-Pulpit), Erythronium (Dog's Tooth Violets), Galanthus (Snowdrops) and Trillium) prefer a bit of cool shade. A well-drained soil will prevent the bulbs from rotting in cool weather.
- You can start planting your bulbs about mid-September although a few, like Colchicums and fritillarias, need to be planted as soon as possible.
- In general plant the bulb with the pointy side up. The exceptions are Fritillaria which need to be planted on their sides so they won't rot in our rainy winters and anemones. Anemones are really hard to tell which is the top and which is the bottom so ask us here at the store and we will show you.
- Every year I get customers coming in at the end of December quite distressed because they just discovered the bag of bulbs they bought in September and stored in the garage. They want to know if they can still plant them. The short answer is yes, as long as the ground isn't frozen you can still plant your bulbs. However for optimum root development try and get them planted before mid-November.
- Plant bulbs to a depth of about 3 times their diameter. For Daffodils, that's about 6 - 8 inches. Smaller bulbs can be planted to a depth of 3-4 inches and so on.
- Mix some organic bone meal into the soil at the bottom of the hole at planting time, to encourage strong root growth. You could mix in some water soluble fertilizer as well, but it's not necessary if you've already amended your soil.
- If rodents tend to eat your bulbs try planting your bulbs in a cage made of hardware cloth or chicken wire. The roots and stems grow through, but the rodents can't get to the bulbs. Make it easy on yourself and make a cage large enough to plant at least a dozen bulbs. Or you can make it really easy on yourself and stick to daffodils, which rodents and most other animals avoid.
- Replace the soil on top of the bulbs. Water the bulbs after planting, to help them settle in and close any air pockets. Through the fall and winter, you only need to worry about watering your bulbs if you're having a particularly dry season. Come spring, you should be well rewarded for all your efforts.

Here are few more yummy spring flowering bulbs we are now featuring at The Natural Gardener:

Tulip 'Apricot Orange'

This is a beautiful, fragrant tulip that will return year after year. It has large flowers on strong stems that withstand most weather conditions. It is a late flowering tulip.



Tulip 'Blushing Beauty'

Another beautiful large flowering tulip for mid to late spring blooms. They can be up to 30" tall so plant these at the back of the border for best effect.



Tulip 'Flaming Spring Green'

You are going to want lots of these tri-coloured tulips in your garden. They are long lasting and bloom in late spring.



Tulip 'Eternal Flame'

Eternal Flame is a striking early blooming tulip. What I like most about it are the leaves. They are green edged in white. Quite lovely.



Narcissus 'Sound'

This is a large cupped daffodil that reaches a height of about 18" and blooms mid spring.



Narcissus 'Irene Copeland'

Irene Copeland is a beautiful double flowering daffodil that will sometimes have more than one flower per stem. It is an early to mid spring bloomer and reaches a height of 18".



Narcissus 'Thalia'

Thalia is a fragrant, pure white daffodil with multiple flowers per stem. It reaches a height of 14" and blooms in mid spring. It adds a very elegant touch to the garden.



Allium 'Purple Sensation'

Purple Sensation is a wonderful ball of purple for the mid spring season. While the flowers are not as large as Christophii they are a deeper purple which really makes them stand out.



Part Sun vs. Part Shade

You read this a lot when you are looking at plant labels or reading about the cultural requirements for a particular plant but what does it really mean. You might be tempted to think that they are pretty much the same thing but there is a difference. An article that was in Horticulture Magazine's website sums it up very nicely I think. Here it is:

Both "part sun" and part shade" refer to a plant that prefers four to six hours of direct sun each day, preferably in the morning and early afternoon. The terms are basically interchangeable. When you see "part sun" used, the grower is stressing that the plant requires at least four hours of sun and will likely do better with closer to six hours. When you see "part shade" used, the grower is stressing that the plant should not receive more than six hours of sun and will likely do better with less. That's why often you'll see a plant indicated for "part shade to shade" or "full to partial sun."

**"By all these lovely tokens
September days are here
With summer's best of weather
And autumn's best of cheer."**

- Author Unknown

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

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



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

Cast Art Studio Planters

Cast Art Studios is located in Saanichton on Vancouver Island. They produce wonderful, inventive concrete statuary, furniture and planters. The Natural Gardener has been carrying some of their products for several years now. Currently we have several very special planters of theirs in the store, the Galle' Dragonfly Planter. We are carrying both the square and the rectangular planters. **Normally they are \$154.00 each but we are featuring them for \$80.00 each for the fall.** Below are pictures and a little explanation about the style of planters. Do come by and check them out.



Emile Gallé (1846-1904) was one of the foremost figures of the French Art Nouveau movement. He began his working career as apprentice to his father, a studio glassmaker. By 1884 he had developed his unique Art Nouveau style and was supplying studio glass to, among others, the Parisian shop "L'Art Nouveau", (source of the movement's namesake). He produced many forms of art glass and later furniture, but is perhaps best known for his overlaid cameo pieces of unusual design and exquisite quality. These pieces now command vast sums at auctions. In this series of planters by Marie Michon, Cast Art Studios have endeavored to reproduce some of his finer work.



Attention chamber music fans!

The Natural Gardener has 2 pairs of complimentary tickets for [Vetta Chamber Music](#)'s next concert. Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis at the store. Purchase additional tickets (\$28) at the door or call ahead 1-866-863-6250.

Concert on Friday, September 16, 2011 at 8pm., West Point Grey United Church, 8th & Tolmie, West Point Grey

TANGISSIMO PLUS

Tangissimo - Linda Lee Thomas, piano, Miles Black, bass and Jonathan Goldman, bandoneon and **Joan Blackman**, violin



SAUL COSENTINO *Calleo y Santa Fe, Duo for Violin and Piano*

ASTOR PIAZOLLA *Original tango quintets, including the famous Adios Nonino*

Plus more tangos – the best of Argentina.

Tangissimo has thrilled thousands of people with live concerts, broadcasts and recordings since their formation in 2003. Piazzolla's violinist Fernando Suárez Paz calls them "... un grupo divino."

Tangissimo has unusually wide appeal to diverse audiences. They have won the hearts of sophisticated listeners everywhere, from classical and jazz lovers in North America to tango aficionados in Buenos Aires. The music they play is as eclectic as their public - a passionate blend of tango, jazz and classical styles.

Joan Blackman, Associate Concertmaster of the Vancouver Symphony, enjoys a vibrant musical life in our community. Besides playing in the orchestra, she is sought after as a first class chamber musician in [North America](#). She is also an active teacher, giving master classes throughout B.C. Joan has performed and recorded as soloist with Vancouver Symphony, Victoria Symphony, CBC Radio Orchestra, and the Banff Festival Orchestra.

I hope you enjoyed the newsletter and found something useful in it. This is always a nice part of the gardening season with warm days and cool nights. Do take a moment to stroll through your garden and enjoy what you have created this year.

Happy Gardening!

Bob



Here I am with Dorina Palmer in her charming garden.
Photo courtesy of Elaine Peterson