

OVER THE GARDEN GATE

Merry
Christmas
to all!



The Newsletter of the Valley Gardeners Club

December 2017

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CHRISTMAS FOR THE BIRDS

The Christmas beast has been devoured, the coffee poured, the fruit cake sliced and devoured and we sit back in the warmth of a room sparkling with decorations. The blinds are drawn to block out the drafts and the snow banks. And we are at peace for one night of the year.

But pause a moment and think of what is outside that window. In the dark and cold birds and other wildlife are huddled in whatever shelter they can find. There was no Christmas feast. Or was there? Did you remember the birds who need a constant source of food to generate heat. Have you planned your garden so there is shelter against the wind and

predators? In this time of giving take a moment to refill your feeders and put out some Christmas treats. A Christmas tree for the birds is a good idea.

Decorate the tree early to give birds plenty of time to find the food before the weather is at its harshest. It can take a week or two for birds to become familiar with the tree and comfortable nibbling at its treats.

Make extra ornaments and replace them as needed all winter long to provide an attractive and effective feeder for many birds. More treats give more birds places to feed and ensures a good food supply for all visiting birds to eat.

Make your backyard even more bird-friendly by offering a heated bird bath to give the birds liquid water and winter bird shelters to help small birds stay comfortable in the coldest weather.

Samples of ornaments:

- Pine cone feeders or donut "wreaths" covered with peanut butter and birdseed
- Small suet balls or suet cakes in holiday shapes, or small mesh bags of suet
- Dried sunflower heads or stalks of dried millet or other grain
- Birdseed ornaments, either homemade or purchased
- Strings of in-shell peanuts or broken walnuts

Choosing a tree where birds regularly perch or roost is another good option to be sure they notice the delicious decorations. If you don't have a suitable tree available, consider a large upright branch. Ideally, the tree will have plenty of horizontal branches widely spaced enough that seed ornaments and other decorative foods can hang freely and give many birds room to feed.

BOOKS

There are so many books available for children now, but sometimes the old classics are best to stimulate the imagination of a young mind. I remind you of three that would make great Christmas gifts. They are not new, as I received them when I was young.

The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Graham

The Ship That Flew by Hilda Lewis (you may not have heard of this one, but if you can find it, there are few boys who are not mesmerized).

A gentle little book for you to read yourself and keep in your heart at Christmas is ***A Christmas Memory*** by Truman Capote (a picture book but not really a child's book).

CLUB NOTES

At the Annual meeting our fellow members rallied to the cause and we ended up with a full slate of officers for the first time in eons. Our executive and chairs for 2018 are as follows:

Executive

President: Philip Longmire

Vice President: Sandi Carroll

Past President: Allison Magee

Secretary: Cinda Kalkman

Treasurer: Gerri Robertson

Program: Alison Scott Butler

Communications: Donna Crawford. (Media Relations has become part of the Communication Committee and is held by Janet Alsop)

Event Chairs

Horticultural Show: Sandi Carroll

Plant Sale: Larry Marsters

Notes

Note #1: There was no attempt to fill what was the Refreshment Chair. Since there are no kitchen facilities at Kingstec it was decided by the executive that refreshments were not necessary.

Note #2: The terms of both the Secretary and Treasurer are up, but Cinda and Gerri have agreed to stay on until someone volunteers to take on the positions. They will remain available to train a replacement. So if you have minute writing or bookkeeping skills, please do not hesitate to step forward.

Note #3. The Program Chair, Allison Scott Butler, is looking for input from the membership on subjects or speakers they would like to see in the upcoming year. You can let her know at the next meeting or e-mail me (sparrowsong@eastlink.ca) and I will pass it on. She wants to get the slate of events lined up for the next year as soon as possible so put your thinking caps on.

Gardens of the Valley Gardeners 1995-present. The profiles of member's gardens, which was started in 1995, hoping to have most of our gardens included, has come to an end. In the time since 1995 only 12 members profiled their gardens and there were two In Memoriam entries. As had been planned, the book has been passed on to the Kings County Museum collection. There it will be available to future historians and researchers. The Museum was pleased with our initiative as there is very little written on the history of gardens in the Kings County area. Ours is a small step to rectify that situation. Should anyone wish to see the book or add their garden profile to it, please contact Bria Stokesbury at the Museum.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, December 11, 2017 - Valley Gardeners Christmas Social. 7:30 pm Kingstec. Bria Stokesbury and Kate Adams of the Courthouse Museum, with Kate's sister Anna Osburn, will speak on "Cherished Antique & Collectable Ornaments". Bring your favourite Yuletide finger foods, either sweet or savory, your appetite and your singing voice. If you have a Christmas carol book, it will be helpful.

Monday January 8, 2018 - VG Club meeting. 7:30 pm, Kingstec. Murray Colbo speaking on "What is a Garden". A delightful retrospective on some of his travels.

April 14, 2018 - District 5 Annual Meeting, The Forties Community Hall.

May 12, 2018 - Valley Gardeners Plant Sale. This is our main fundraiser so start thinking now what you will be able to bring. Larry Marsters Plant Sale Chair.

June 1 and 2, 2018. - NSAGC Annual Meeting, Days Inn, Bridgewater. Program below. Registration Form and other info on the NSAGC Website under Convention.

Please advise us if you know of upcoming events of interest.

NSAGC ANNUAL MEETING

2018 NSAGC Convention Program**Hosted by South Shore District, June 1st & 2nd, 2018, Days Inn, Bridgewater****Friday, 1st**

1:00 – 5:00 Registration

1:00 – 5:00 Vendors open/Self guided tours of local attractions, nurseries & farm markets (map

in registration bag)

1:00 – 4:00 Floral Arrangements in place (Judging on close of entries)

2:30 – 3:30 Demo/Workshop – Charles Berry - Cleaning & Sharpening Hand Tools (max. 40)

2:00 – 4:00 Tour of Freemans Forest (Details on registration form)

6:00 – 6:30 Opening ceremonies, cash bar open

6:30 – 7:15 Erica Poole – Maritime Osteopathy – “Stretching into Spring”

7:15 Social time

Saturday 2nd

8:00 – 12:00 Registration

9:00 – 4:00 Vendors open

8:45 – 9:45 NSAGC Annual Meeting and AGM Door Prize

9:45 – 10:15 Nutrition Break/Door Prizes

10:15 – 11:00 Iain Jack – Fernwood Nursery - Ferns in Garden Design

11:15 – 12:00 Chris Sanford – Yonder Hill Farm - Soil Preparations

12:00 – 1:15 Lunch/Raffle Draw # 1

1:15 – 2:00 Chris Sanford – Bridgewater Community Gardens Coordinator - Planting for Pollinators

2:00 – 2:15 Nutrition Break/Raffle Draw # 2

2:15 – 3:00 Greg Sutcliff – Chestnut Hill Farm - Beekeeping

3:15 – 4:00 Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute – Monarch Butterfly

4:00 - 5:30 Free time to explore the area

5:30 Meet & Greet in Foyer, Cash Bar Open

6:15 Banquet/Guest Speaker – Rosmarie Lohnes – Helping Nature Heal - Ecological Restoration

Awards

Closing Announcements

Sunday, 3rd

10:00 - 2:00 Open Garden Tours (Map in Registration Bag)

Floral Contest:

The floral contest will be club entries only. The theme will be “Spring Tea”, a composition using a tea service set, on a tray (Teapot, Cup & Saucer, Sugar & Creamer). Tray not to exceed 18” in any dimension. Floral element to be displayed in the teapot.

Note: Some timings may be adjusted slightly on the official program.

IN MEMORIAM

BAILLY, Henri Emile Desire, 77, (known as the “Mad Frenchman” and “The Wild Man with a Beard”), passed away November 6, 2017 in Digby. Born in France during the Second World War, Henri immigrated to Canada in 1969 and became a Canadian citizen in 1975. He was a quiet man who had a great love of the land and was proud to live off the grid. At first he lived in BC where he was landless and virtually penniless. He later moved to Nova Scotia where he initially drove taxi and subsequently worked at the Kentville Research Station. In a 1986 Harrowsmith article he was credited with bringing the Kiwi to Canada where it had been previously not been thought to be capable of surviving in the harsh Canadian climate. While in Nova Scotia he was able to convince a friend to plant two males and one female Kiwi in their backyard. They survived to produce hundreds of fruit each year. This gave him a credibility with both federal and provincial governments who had previously shown absolutely no interest to Henri and his ideas. There will be a large absence in the hearts of those who knew this wonderful, eccentric and giving man. He will be truly missed. Memorial donations may be made to thr Kentville Research Station.

LEAVES

End of the Play by William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)

One wish ere yet the long year ends;
 Let's close it with a parting rhyme,
 A pledge, a hand, to all our friends
 As fits the merry Christmas time.

On life's wide scene you, too, have parts,
 That Fate ere long shall bid you play;
 Good-night: with honest, gentle hearts,
 A kindly greeting go away.

DID YOU KNOW

Aconitum (Monkshood, Wolfbane) species and cultivars are toxic. They're seriously injurious if ingested, and can be harmful if handled with open cuts or broken skin. The best strategy is to wear gloves when touching any part of the plants, including the roots. When cleaning garden beds, put all parts into the garbage, not into compost piles or bins. I wouldn't grow monkshood in gardens where adventurous children chase balls through the beds.

On the other hand, the fact is that poinsettias are not poisonous. Nor are they edible and it can be expected that, when eaten in quantity, they may cause stomach upset with possible vomiting. This may happen when an overactive puppy devours an entire plant. But in the case of a child who eats a single leaf, no ill effects would be expected. He or she will probably not eat more as they are terribly bitter.

FROM THE GARDEN RECIPE BOX

Larry Marsters has asked that I publish the recipe for the Sweet Onion Jelly which I entered in the Horticultural Show. I have made it with Vidalia onions, when they are in season, but I imagine any sweet onion would do in a pinch. By the way, Vidalia onions are not grown here, they are legally owned by the State of Georgia, have a distinctive sweet taste so are only available as an import between April and September. Hence, this is not a “buy local” recipe. That being said, I am going to try making it for Christmas with sweet Bermuda onions just to see if there is a distinctive difference in flavour.

Sweet Onion Jelly (Yield: 3 ½ cups)

- 3 cups chopped onions (Vidalia, Walla Walla or your favorite sweet variety)
- ¾ cup vinegar
- 2 ½ - 3 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes or less to taste
- 1 (1 5/8 ounce) package powdered No Sugar Needed variety fruit pectin (I used Bernardin)

Puree the onion and vinegar together in a blender until smooth.

Pour into a saucepan.

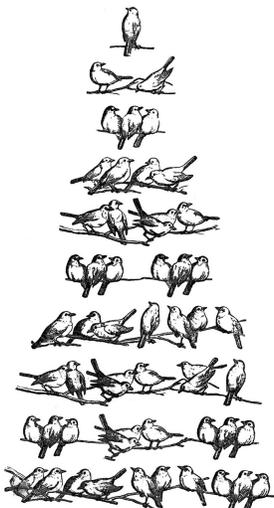
Add the sugar and crushed pepper and bring to boil over medium-high heat.

Boil for five (5) minutes and then stir in the powdered pectin.

Bring to a hard boil and boil for one (1) minute.

Pour into hot sterilized jars, secure the lids and process for ten (10) minutes in a boiling water bath.

GOT NEWS???



Send to: Editor: Donna Crawford, sparrowsong@eastlink.ca.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Valley Gardener's Club. There are purposely no coloured pictures in the newsletters to allow for less expensive black and white printing.