

OVER THE GARDEN GATE

The Newsletter of the Valley Gardeners Club

October 2017

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Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Valley Gardener's Club. There are purposely no pictures in the newsletters to allow for less expensive black and white printing. Always looking for submissions, critiques or suggestions. Send to: Editor: Donna Crawford, sparrowsong@eastlink.ca.

Note: There may be no newsletter, or an abbreviated one, in November and December 2017 to allow your editor's brain to re-group. Comments on content or changes to the newsletter in the upcoming year would be appreciated. Also, should anyone wish to join the Communications Committee, please contact me for information. D.

Brrr

In a lighthearted mystery the author names one of her towns Brrr. Brilliant! In one word she has completely set the scene. This all takes me to thinking about winter, the white season. The pastels, yellows and vivid green of spring, the hot reds, yellows and vivid blues of summer and the burnt umber and russet of fall all pass to leave us in a colourless world. Or is it?

In viewing the movie about Frank Cabot's garden (The Gardener), for me, all the colour, amazing structures and exciting waterways were blown away by the final scenes of the place at rest in the winter. This can be a time of peace, of absolute tranquillity, when the sculptural aspect of your garden is at its best. But it takes some work. And there is no better time than now to start.

There are many phases to winter in the garden. The first is when there is a light frost and every plant is outlined in white. This is a time to wander and be awed and for those with cameras, a magical time. Blink and you may miss it.

The second phase is after the first snowfall. This is when your garden can become a painting on the ground if you prepare it now. Edge all your flower beds meticulously and remove any really ugly dead foliage, leaving those decorative seed pods, rose hips and grasses for the birds. Well clipped hedges and topiary are lovely backdrops in the summer, but when outlined in snow form the sculptural elements to the pictures you formed by careful edging of your flower beds. Especially lovely if you have a window overlooking the garden and a chair from which to drink in the tranquil picture with a cup of steaming coffee or a nice glass of sherry. What better way to admire your handiwork!

The third phase is when snow blankets everything. Outlines of flower beds disappear and evergreens bow their heads to the god of winter. Now you can see and admire the various kinds of bark and the positioning of your shrubs and trees. A stand of white birch, white on white is a beautiful thing. If you are lucky enough to have a pheasant or two, now able to reach the rose hips on the top of the bushes, and if you have positioned the roses so you can admire this sight, you are blessed. In the midst of the silence of deep snow, the most colour and activity will be provided by the birds. Yes, it is great to watch the activity at your bird feeders, but they do not have the landscape appeal of brightly coloured berries and deep green evergreens that are just as attractive to birds. Reds of tiny crab apples which

hang on all winter, winterberries translucent against the sun, highbush cranberries, barberries and rugosa or multiflora rose hips. The deep blue of juniper berries, the shrivelled white of the snowberry. Cedar trees and clipped hedges provide sculptural beauty and a wonderful place to hide while munching on seeds. Pine trees provide a favourite food for many birds. Layer your landscape with tall trees, shrubs and at the bottom seed heads of sunflower, coneflower, cosmos. Birds are the voice of your garden.

To hear them trill from the shrubs and the treetops will fill your heart with joy.

The fourth phase is at the end of the winter when the detritus of unfinished work shows its ugly head, the snow turns grey and slush fills your boots. This is the time to get out your onion seeds for planting, clean your pots and stock up on potting soil. Time for the seasons to roll on again. Tranquillity is gone. The smell of mud brings on thoughts of digging in the soil. But what is that??? The birds are returning from their winter in the south. They are ravenous after the long flight and will be looking for the last of the berries you planted in your *winter* garden.

BOOKS

For those of you who saw and were blown away by *The Gardener* at the Al Whittle Theatre on Sept 20, or for those of you who missed it, the wonderful book on the garden, "A Greater Perfection" is now available at Lee Valley for \$80.00. Considering it was \$180.00 when it came out it is a steal.

There are several other books on Canadian Gardens also available from Lee Valley, including the wonderful garden developed in the 20's by Elsie Reford at Grand Metis. This in addition to ones closer to home, The Public Gardens and the Annapolis Royal Historical Garden.

See them on line at: <http://www.leevalley.com/en/gifts/page.aspx?p=75556&cat=75550> or <http://www.leevalley.com/en/garden/page.aspx?p=75550>

And a big congrats to Lee Valley who are donating the profits on sales to the gardens!

MASTER GARDENER TRAINING

The Master Gardener training program at Dal Ag caters to participants who have a passion for gardening, wanting to expand their knowledge in the horticulture field, or wanting to become a Master Gardener! The training program consists of four independent-study classes available online and a one-week, on-site summer school. Participants have the opportunity to take one course or all courses.

The cost is \$375 for each course.

For more information copy the following to your browser:

<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/agriculture/extended-learning/programs-courses/master-gardener-training.html>.

CLUB NOTES

In November, at our AGM we will be looking for some new Executive, Chairs and Committee members. Start thinking now of what you may be interested in or have some

time to participate. Allison Magee as Past President will be the Chair of the Nominating Committee, so let him know your interests or discuss the responsibilities with the current Chairs. Acting on a Committee is a great way to learn the workings of the club and have fun without the responsibility of taking on the Chair. Only through volunteers will our Club stay active and vital!

Vacant positions:

Vice President

Program Chair & Committee members

Secretary

Treasurer

Plant Sale Chair & Committee members

Horticultural Show Chair & Committee members

Communication Committee members

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, October 16, 2017 - 7:30 pm, Room 241, BAC Acadia. Valley Gardeners joint meeting with the Blomidon Naturalists. Topic: Rock rose.

Robin Whidden will be on hand to receive payment for the AGM banquet. \$16.00 for a turkey dinner. Please have correct change if possible or write a cheque to The Valley Gardeners Club.

Monday, November 13, 2017 - Valley Gardeners Annual Meeting and Banquet. Location: St. James Anglican Church, Main St., Kentville. Handicapped parking on Church Street or by ramp behind the church. Speaker: Allison Magee on "An antique but not a heritage rose". Banquet turkey dinner must be pre-ordered. Cost \$16.00. We hope that all our new members will try to join us in the festivities. Time to chat with new and old friends.

Monday, December 11, 2017 - Valley Gardeners Christmas Social. Bria Stokesbury and Kate Adams of the Courthouse Museum 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.

OLD FRIENDS

It was wonderful to run into Anne and Charles Hope at the grocery store. They have moved to a garden-less apartment in Wolfville and would love to hear from you. It reminds me of how many old friends, who we once saw at the garden club, we have lost contact with. Pay them a visit. Things which should be important to us sometimes get lost in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Make time.

LEAVES

What does the Earth Desire? I will put it in just a few short sentences... To be admired in her loveliness, To be tasted in her delicious fruits, To be listened to in her teaching, To be endured in the severity of her discipline, To be cared for as a maternal source from whence we come, a destiny to which we return. It's very simple...

- Thomas Berry, American (November 9, 1914 – June 1, 2009)

DID YOU KNOW

Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), who was a great influence on garden design, took much of her impressionistic use of colour in gardens due to deteriorating eyesight, which largely put an end to her career as a painter and watercolourist. Goes to prove nothing can keep a good woman down. She wrote 13 books after her 55th birthday and wrote 43 of the thousands of gardening articles after she was 86 years old. Read about her amazing life at: <http://gertrudejekyll.co.uk/> I could never dislike someone who was known in life as Auntie Bumps. One of those people I would love to have known.

Another woman who took on gardening late in life is a famous Canadian, **Elsie Reford** (1872- 1967). She began her gardens at the mouth of the Gaspé when she was 53 after a doctor suggested she take up gardening instead of horseback riding and fishing. She had no training and did not use a landscape architect. In the inhospitable soil conditions, she studied the needs of each of the plants she chose and literally built soil for each, training farmers and fishermen who desperately needed work during the depression. Her gardens at Grand-metis are now a National Historic Site of Canada. A study of her family and background is like a study of the history of Canada. Check it out. Her grandson, Alexander, has written extensively about the family and the gardens.

NOVA SCOTIA ASSOCIATION OF GARDEN CLUBS

Join the NSAGC Facebook Group. They now have almost 3,000 gardeners who have joined. Every member of the group may post events, pictures, questions, answers, and interesting things about gardening. Members may also invite others to join. On Facebook, go to Groups, search NSAGC on the top bar and ask to join. Questions? Contact annjones@eastlink.ca

FROM THE GARDEN RECIPE BOX

Still have a few green tomatoes floating around? I love these for breakfast with eggs and bacon. May be an acquired taste, but many years ago when I first tasted them in the south I was hooked.

FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

4 servings

3 large green tomatoes

½ cup yellow cornmeal

1Tbsp packed brown sugar

1 tsp salt

¼ tsp ground black pepper

vegetable oil

Cut each tomato into 3 slices. Combine corn meal, brown sugar, salt & pepper. Dip both sides of tomato slices into corn meal mixture. Heat a small amount of oil in a large frying pan. Fry tomato slices, a few at a time over medium-high heat until golden brown on both sides, adding more oil to pan as needed.

Here's something to use lots of zucchini. Freezes well and is a nice hearty soup as the days get colder.

GREEN SOUP

1 medium onion, chopped
2 stalks celery, diced
2 Tbsp. oil

6 cups vegetable stock (if using canned or dried which is very salty, reduce added salt)
3/4 cup dried green split peas, rinsed
1 bay leaf

6 cups zucchini
1-2 Tbsp chopped fresh basil (of 1/4 tsp dried)
1/8 tsp freshly ground black pepper
2 tsp salt

1 lb. spinach, washed and chopped
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Directions:

Saute onion and celery in 2 Tbsp oil until soft.

Add 4 cups stock, split peas and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer for about 40 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add zucchini, remaining 2 cups stock and seasonings. Cook for another 10 minutes.

Remove bay leaf and discard.

Puree Soup in blender.

Return soup to pot and stir in spinach and parsley. Cook over medium heat until spinach is wilted and soft. Adjust seasonings and add a little further stock if too thick.

Note:

Soup is also delicious leaving out the spinach and parsley step. Or freeze at this point and add the spinach and parsley later.

KNOW YOUR CLUB EXECUTIVE AND CHAIRS

The following people work hard at keeping our club up and running. Feel free to express your opinions to any of them. There are only names, no contact info. Should you wish to contact one of the named people please drop me a line or call and I will provide the info. Executive: President: Philip Longmire. Vice President: vacant. Secretary: Cinda Kaulkman. Treasurer: Gerri Robertson. Program Chair: Robin Whidden. Communications Chair: Donna Crawford.