

OVER THE GARDEN GATE



The Newsletter of the Valley Gardeners Club

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UPCOMING EVENTS

October 4, 2018 - Kingstec Fall Market "Fall into Planting" from 10:30am -1:30pm.

October 6, 2018 at 1 – 2:30 pm, Blomidon Nurseries. Kari Hjelkrem, founder of Down to Earth Gardening, shares her experiences using fall colour to enhance your gardens. As an added bonus, Kari will also be providing tips on protecting your plants from the hazards of winter. Free, refreshments.

October 12, 2018 - Fairy Wreath making workshop at Tangled Garden with Angie Oriana Jenkins of Sister Lotus. 4:30 - 6:00 pm. \$40.00 All plant material and supplies provided. Contact oriana@sisterlotus.com or 902-680-8839.

October 15, 2018 - Valley Gardeners joint meeting with Blomidon Naturalists. 7:30 pm Room 241, BAC, Acadia. Doug Hickman, whose garden outside Canning we visited a couple of years ago, will speak on Water and Wildlife in your Backyard. The presentation will: (i) provide an overview of the creation of the water features in the garden and different water "zones" in the garden (e.g. open water, marsh etc.); (ii) look at water from different perspectives and forms and how it impacts the garden and wildlife (e.g. ice and freeze/thaw can be quite a problem for the garden, but snow is wonderful for tracking animals); and (iii) the wildlife that is attracted to the garden.

October 28, 2018 Roast and Toast Fundraiser - Linda Best and Ann Anderson 155 Years hosted by Meadowbrook Farms. 5:30 PM – 8:30 pm Kings Mutual Century Centre, 250 Veterans Drive, Berwick. Tickets · \$26.74 available from <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/roast-and-toast-fundraiser-linda-and-ann-155-years-tickets-49458361290c>

October until Mid-December 2018 - "Our Heritage Hearth: From Field to Farm ", Exploring The Roots of Valley Cooking From Garden to Table. Kings County Museum, Kentville. See Allison Magee's collection of antique garden tools.

November 12, 2018 - Valley Gardeners 35th Annual Meeting and Banquet. Roast turkey dinner with all the trimmings including choices of pie for dessert. The venue is still at the St James Anglican Church Hall in Kentville on the corner of Main Street and Prospect Ave. The entrance is on Prospect Avenue and there is a ramp at the back of the Hall for those who need it. Others can park in the municipal lot, the hair salon lot or the Cornwallis Inn. There is also other street parking on Main Street.

We will meet at 5:30 pm for socializing and paying memberships or unpaid pre-ordered meals. Dinner will be served at 6 pm followed by Michelle Muis speaking on Therapeutic Gardening. The last item is our Annual General Meeting with reports and hopefully some new executive members to take over from those retiring.

Members are asked to bring a small live arrangement for the tables with items from your garden or a friend's. **Please contact Robin at robinwhidden@gmail.com or 902-365-5321 to reserve your meal and arrange payment.** We encourage new members to make an effort to come. It is a fun time to chat with new and old friends and get caught up on club happenings.

June 7/8, 2019 - NSAGC Convention, Louis Millet Centre, New Minas. Applications for vendors now being accepted. Contact vandadow@bellaliant.net or 902-679-6676

PUTTING THE GARDEN TO BED

Well, this has not been much of a year in my garden, what with heat and lack of rain and health problems. But I have been walking around, thinking of what I can do better next year.

The first thing I can do is put the garden to bed properly for the winter. Then both it and I can take a well needed rest over the winter and hopefully face spring with vigor and determination.

Typically, you want to start getting your garden ready for winter right after the first frost has killed off most of the annuals. That happened in September this year so we are probably running a little late to finish those essential garden chores.

The best time to plant, divide, and transplant is in early fall. You can use the divisions to fill in the gaps which have appeared and at the same time assess your garden design. Dividing and replanting allows you to refresh the soil to reinvigorate the potting holes. Peonies and hostas particularly respond well to fall moving. And it is a good time to plant your roses. Fall is also a good time to move shrubs, but if time gets away from you, you can at least root prune the shrubs for easier transplanting in the spring.

When preparing a garden for fall, start by removing any materials used for supporting your plants, like bean stakes, tomato cages or trellises. Clean all of these items by wiping them down or spraying them with a two to one solution of water and bleach. This will kill any diseases that may be lingering on the supports.

The next step in cleaning the garden is to remove spent plant material from the garden. Dead plants, old fruit and vegetables and any diseased plants should be removed from the garden beds and disposed of. If the spent plant material was healthy, it can be composted. If the plant material showed signs of disease, it should be disposed of in the municipal trash or by being burned. If you compost diseased plant material, you risk re-infecting your garden next year with the same disease. If you don't have a compost pile, you can simply chop the dead plants and spread or dig into the garden. They will decompose over the winter and add nutrients and organic matter.

After this, another step in preparing a vegetable garden for winter is to spread compost, composted manure or other fertilizers onto the vegetable beds. You can also take this opportunity to plant a cover crop for the winter, such as rye, clover or buckwheat.

In the flower border cut back perennials to a height of 3 to 6 inches using a pair of hand pruners or, sometimes, a string trimmer. This task not only saves time in spring but also keeps harmful insects and pathogens from finding a cozy place to spend the winter. Spare plants like ornamental grasses, purple coneflowers, and black-eyed Susans because they provide food for wildlife and winter interest. Don't cut perennials all the way to the ground until spring as the remaining stubs serve as reminders of where plants are.

A word about bringing in herbs: First, unless you have lots of sunny south facing windows, forget about trying to over winter herbs. Second, don't bother with bringing in plants like oregano which dries well, or parsley, which freezes well. Rosemary is the only herb to overwinter in my house and the same plant has done so for over 20 years. Thyme will last for a while in the fall and then

becomes dry sticks dropping leaves all over the counter. Chives needs a winter rest before it will grow well so allow it to freeze before bringing indoors. It will die down but may regenerate in the warmth and sunshine of a south window. It will be slow growing and spindly little things, so if you use a lot of chives, don't bother. On the whole bringing in herbs is a waste of time. Of course sage, mint, chives, lemon balm, tarragon and lovage can stay in the ground all winter. Dill, salad burnet and borage will reseed itself all over the place.

Don't forget to have a look at your notes from the spring, as you probably need a reminder about what bulbs to plant and where to plant them. I didnt check my charts and merrily dug up a whole clump of tulips while plant a mum in a "bare spot". Such is the life of a gardener.

CLUB NEWS

Our Annual Meeting and Banquet: This year is our 35th Anniversary! We are inviting some of our remaining founders to join us, so I hope you will all be there to give them a group hug of appreciation. The details are all above under upcoming events.

Running our Club: On October 1st your executive met to discuss the future of our club, taking direction from your responses to the survey circulated in August. The question is how much does our club mean to you? It requires a serious love of gardening by our members to keep our club going. Are we filling the needs of the gardening community? Should it be disbanded or seriously changed to be more vital and in tune with the times? There will be a new executive pondering these questions next year. The first opportunity to have a club discussion will probably not be until January. In the meantime the executive is looking at various methods of raising our visibility in the community, new means of financing, taking a look at whether a new venue with a greater opportunity to socialize at meetings is in order and much more.

As the AGM approaches and a new year, a new executive is needed to decide upon and implement any changes. Things do not have to be done the same way as in the past. The word "Chair" and "Committees" strikes fear in the hearts of many. Think of it more as a group of friends having fun putting together something in which you are all interested . Like making a quilt or hooking a rug we need aa group of people who are passionate about gardening to help us enjoy this wonderful hobby together. How bad can that be? It should not be a burden on the back of one or two people to put together a program, but activities that you, as members, want to participate in. Work together. Enjoy.

We need a bookkeeper to step forward. We do not have a complicated set of books. You don't have to know fancy computerized programs. Just simple tracking our expenses and revenues. Cinda would like to step down as secretary. She has been a dedicated minute taker. Is there someone who comes to most meetings who could take over? Nothing formal, we just need a record of executive and club meetings. I remember when Joanne Bezanson took over from me with fear and trepidation. But Joanne pitched into everything with joy and enthusiasm and her minutes came out decorated with butterflies and flowers. I miss her exuberance in the club. Finally we need a Vice President. Anyone who takes this on will have two years of training under Sandi Carroll before moving up. You don't need to have been a big wig executive before. This is our club. Supposedly a simple club for sharing the love of gardening and social pleasure. Not a big scary thing. Maybe we have become too formal and people are afraid to take things on. It should not be so and it is up to all of us to change that and just have fun for a change.

DID YOU KNOW

Culinary historians believe that much of the first Thanksgiving meal consisted of seafood, which is often absent from today's menus. Mussels in particular were abundant in New England and could

be easily harvested because they clung to rocks along the shoreline. Lobster, bass, clams and oysters might also have been part of the feast.

Whether mashed or roasted, white or sweet, potatoes had no place at the first Thanksgiving. After encountering it in its native South America, the Spanish began introducing the potato to Europeans around 1570. But by the time the Pilgrims boarded the Mayflower, the tuber had not yet doubled back to North America .

GARDEN MEMORIES

Hopefully all your produce has been harvested and is now in the cold room, the freezer or in rows of bottles in the pantry. There is something very satisfying about getting out your canning and preserving cookbooks and smelling the aroma of fruits and vegetables being processed. For many of us it takes us back to the kitchens of our childhood with long forgotten memories and tastes. It is particularly special if you have hand written recipes from family members. Even if you never make the pickle or jam either because you just don't do that anymore or can't decipher the "make a brine to float an egg" directions, it is worth having those moments of time with the ghosts of fondly remembered people from the past.

As a child, my mother and I spent summers in Ontario with my grandmother and grandfather. Isn't it amazing how taste memories can outlive all other memories. My grandmother died when I was in grade one but I can still remember the taste of her tomato butter, ripe cucumber pickles, English mustard, mint sauce, scones with strawberry jam and so much more. I was delighted when I got the recipes for tomato butter and ripe cucumber pickles from a cousin. I was successful with the butter but, although the pickles tasted the same, I never mastered the clear glass appearance and crisp bite of hers. Maybe my memory fails me.

With all our technology, we still have so much to learn from the past. As a child, we got groceries about twice a year. But all winter we ate from the "cellar" where cans of fruit and vegetables lined the shelves, cabbages hung from the rafters, carrots and parsnips nestled in boxes of sawdust from the mill and mushrooms grew in dark bins of composted horse manure. Now we have to go to the grocery store at least once a week. But there are still those of us who have a stocked "cold room" as well as a freezer. Comes in handy when the power goes out.

Although the gardens of the forties and fifties suffered from the invention of commercial fertilizers and insecticides to bolster food production both during and after the war, many of the old ways have been retained on small holdings and from Victory Gardens. Gather as many of the insights as you can from days gone by as most of them are what we now call "organic".

Now is the time to think of the generations coming after you. Put together a book or binder with your favourite preserving recipes, gardening hints and ideas for what to do with several buckets full of tomatoes or zucchini. Tell your children or grandchildren how important it is to add to it and pass it on down to their children or grandchildren.

EDITORIAL: THE HOSPITAL COURTYARD:

I was walking in the hospital courtyard a week ago. The plaque says that it was planted by the Valley Gardeners. For that we should have some pride, but I cannot be proud of the mess it has become. What was meant as a place of peace and tranquillity for those either being treated or visiting their loved ones has become a mass of weeds and untended plants. It is difficult to find the paths let alone walk on them. Benches are sinking and looking uncared for. Bob Painter, a beloved member of the club who has since passed on, crafted those benches and the arbour. He and Ann tended that garden to perfection with the help of club members who volunteered at least a day or two a week to weed and water. It was designed by founding member Tim Amos. It was our greatest community effort, and yet now it sits forlorn and over grown. Surely there is something to be done to salvage this garden and our pride. For those who have not seen this

“garden” at the Valley Regional Hospital courtyard, go and have a look and see if you can imagine in your mind’s eye what it was and what it could be again.

THANKSGIVING DINNER

Now that the harvest is over it is time to give thanks for the fact that the harvest was good (whether our own or the farmer’s) over the Thanksgiving dinner table. Turkey is traditional but like so many others now, my table will hold a vegetarian offering of local produce. Without the perfectly basted bird, it is sometimes hard to think of a showpiece to serve. However, a table groaning with vegetables can be pretty spectacular too. Presentation is everything. If there are traditional meat eaters in your crowd you will be doubly challenged to skip the turkey. They won’t mind so much if you have dressing and cranberry sauce, so be sure to make a traditional bread stuffing, replacing the turkey drippings with vegetable stock. Add a few pecans and dried fruit, but keep things as traditional as possible - keep the kale with lentils for tomorrow’s dinner and use shredded brussels sprouts and kale in your green salad. Stick to the usual fall garden vegetables potatoes, turnip, peas, green beans, carrots, cabbage. Try a nice acorn squash stuffed with wild rice, nuts and fruit for eye appeal. Make scalloped potatoes or a potato pie instead of mashed. Don’t eat dairy? Replace the milk with vegetable stock. Mix your peas with chopped sauteed, mushrooms, red peppers and/or baby onions. Sprinkle with almonds. Make a casserole of either sweet potatoes or turnip and apples. And of course, there has to be dessert! Apple, meatless mincemeat or pumpkin pie, or all. Be creative with your veggies and people will be singing your praises and not miss the turkey. Where’s the protein, you say? You have eaten it without knowing it - in the potatoes, the nuts, the peas, the wild rice, the broccoli, the potatoes, the stuffing, milk or cheese if you have used them. Who needs a turkey?

FROM THE GARDEN RECIPE BOX

VAMPIRE FINGERNAILS

Wondering what to do with all those seeds from your Hallowe’en Jack-O’lantern? Here’s an easy spooky treat for the kids.

Ingredients:

150g raw, washed pumpkin seeds from your carved out pumpkin

1 tbsp butter, melted

1 tsp crushed garlic

½ tsp salt

1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.

2. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and spread evenly in a roasting tray and bake, stirring occasionally, until lightly toasted. Cool and serve.

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. The Valley Gardners is a member of the Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs. <http://www.nsagc.com>

