

OVER THE GARDEN GATE

The Newsletter of the Valley Gardeners Club

September 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.

VISIONS OF BEAUTY

Here it is, September, when we are supposed to be thinking of the ripeness of autumn. Not me. The bulb catalogues have come and I am dreaming of the visions of spring.

Not that I have ever achieved beautiful drifts of British Bluebells under the trees. No, I have neither trees nor bluebells in my tiny apartment back yard. Still, I delight in the revelation of colour as the snow slowly melts and the absolute magic of living things appearing amidst the cold and barren landscape.

My spirit leaps when I see the first of the snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) shyly peeping out under the trees in someone's yard and I am assured that spring is truly here once again. Although a single clump of snowdrops will bring joy to my heart, I am greedy and am really bowled over by massed blankets of white. With snowdrops this is easily achieved. They naturalize easily and may be planted in clumps of bulbs in the fall, or the clump can be divided in the spring when they are in full bloom as long as they are re-set at the same depth as they were growing. Amazing! For looking so delicate they are tough as old boots. Similar but a little larger and later blooming are the green tipped *Leucojum aestivum* (summer snowdrop). They do not naturalize quite as easily.

Great swaths of bulbs can be jaw dropping. As King Butler proved by lining his driveway with daffodils, sometimes you just have to take that leap of faith to create a thing of beauty. Daffodils come in so many forms now from the tiny "Minnow" or the strange Hoop Petticoat *Bulbocodium* which look great in the rock garden to the traditional King Arthur standing tall in great drifts for picking, they all have a place. There is a daffodil for all tastes, from the jolly literary *Narcissus Poeticus* to the sad, rather funereal white *Thalia* with its head drooping in sorrow. Daffodils tend to be reliable in returning each year with little fuss.

Tulips, on the other hand, can be trying. The beautiful Darwins and many hybrids knock your socks off with their range of colour the first year, only to disappoint in subsequent years with fewer and smaller blooms until they finally send up only a single, sad, blossomless leaf. If you have the patience, you can dig them up each

year, remove the small bulblets to a propagation bed, and replant the large bulbs in fresh amended soil. Or if you have the money you can do as the parks and treat them as annuals planting new bulbs each year. Lily flowered tulips are a bit more reliable but still will eventually dwindle. I feel they are worth the bother or the cost for the excitement of masses of colour. And if you get the right combination of varieties, you can have successive blossom from early to late summer. The exception to the rule is the species tulip such as Tarda. These little bursts of sunshine naturalize and brighten up dark corners of your garden in ever enlarging clumps. There is a wide variety of species colours and shapes, but all small and early. Kaufmanniana, the water lily tulip, will bloom with the crocuses and come in a variety of colours, some different on the outside from the open flower. Turkestanica is a thin, delicate yellow and white creation. Most species are only about 4" high, but Clusiana is a red and white peppermint stick 14" tall. Species tulips, despite their short blooming time, can become a mania. Most don't appear in traditional catalogues but are available on the internet. It is unfortunate that the spectacular variety of large tulips now available has overshadowed these species delights. Bulb foliage must be left on to replenish the vigor of the bulb for next year. This requires other later foliage to hide it. Day lilies and hostas are ideal as they don't make a show until you need them and don't interfere with your spring show of blooms. Species tulips and other small spring bulbs lose their foliage more quickly and are small enough to be hidden by anything.

Everyone relates to the crocus for early spring bloom. *Crocus tommasinianus*, an heirloom and squirrel resistant is the first to appear any time the day is warm enough to expose a patch of ground. Unfortunately, it usually snows again and the blossoms are not as tough as snowdrops and often sulk and droop. It is jolly, though, to see that first splash of colour. The later crocus come in many colours and are larger and more virile, ranging from the dainty lavender Snow Bunting to the robust golden crocus X luteus and the Cloth of Gold planted in drifts by Thomas Jefferson with deep bronzy purple brushed on the three outermost golden petals. Crocus divide happily and require no care, even scattered over lawns.

Chionodoxa (Glory of the Snow) paint lawns blue in the most amazing way and then disappear into the lawn to miraculously appear right after the purple violets the next spring. They are inexpensive so be generous in your planting.

Scilla sibirica (Squill) form generous clumps eventually and are deer resistant. If you can find them, *Scilla peruviana* (Giant squill) have more flowers atop 6-12" stalks and are the most glorious deep blue.

Pushkinia are the thugs of the bulb world. Small and pale lavender striped, they naturalize like mad, especially where you don't want them. I think they stand back and pitch their seeds as far as they can and then laugh at you. Even in large swaths I find them anaemic.

I find the Hyacinth a bit too over the top, too scented, too hard to combine with other plants. But that is just me. We all have our likes and dislikes, and many people are

very fond of them, especially to start in vases of water or stones indoors during the winter. I find that, like paper whites and lilies, they overpower the whole house with their scent.

The Grape Hyacinth, on the other hand is delicate, a beautiful blue when you least expect it, and a delight among other flowers. The foliage appears in the fall with flowers in the spring.

Despite Vita Sackville West disliking it, I am very fond of Fritillaria meleagris, the snake's head fritillary. It has a delicate checkered purple or white drooping head. I am particularly fond of its seed heads which make beautiful dried flower arrangements and whose head turns upward to form a cup on a tall strong stem. Its relative, Fritillaria imperialis or Crown imperial is much larger, up to 3' with an imposing crown of blossoms. The poor thing, however, suffers from extreme body odour which is most obnoxious.

One of the most delicate daisy like flowers and lacy foliage which hybridizes easily is the white, purple or pink Anemone blanda (Windflower). A short plant, it mixes well as an under story for tulips. Do not confuse it with the misbehaved Anemone canadensis and Anemone sylvestris. These are much taller and will choke out everything in sight in the garden. They do look lovely spreading through the woods. A cute little thing which I have never had great success growing is Eranthis hyemalis (Winter Aconite). Tiny bulbs which look like rabbit droppings with no visible top or bottom, I was told to plant them on their side. Each year one or two darling little yellow charmers with their lace skirts appeared from the couple of dozen I planted, only to disappear the next year.

Iris reticulata are small blue irises with a yellow beard on the fall, while the Dutch Iris (Iris hollandica) comes in an array of colours. Both are wonderful in early spring and form ever expanding small clumps over the years.

Erythronium 'Pagoda' (Trout Lily, dog toothed violet) - I picked masses of these little yellow lilies from the ditch in the long lane to our farm as a child. They loved the moisture in the ditch and the shade of the trees overhead. They always made me smile with their swept back petals of jolly yellow.

There are other bulbs to plant in the fall such as allium or lilies, but they are not spring blooming, so have no place here.

SEPTEMBER BLOOM REPORT

Looking around your garden this month, do you find it a little lacking in colour? Take stock and fill in new varieties this fall or make a wish list for spring planting. Here is a list of suggestions of plants which are blooming right now. It is not exhaustive. I am sure to have missed something. Do a little research to see what is right for you.

Aconitum carmichaelii (Monkshood) poisonous so plant away from children and make sure you wear gloves when handling.

Actaea (previously Cimicifuga) simplex 'Atropurpurea' - a great statuesque woodland plant.

Agastache foeniculum (Anise hyssop)

Anemone x hybrida (Japanese Anemone) If you don't like spreaders this is not for you.

Aster novae-angliae (New England Aster, Michaelmas Daisy)

Caryopteris (Blue Beard, Blue Mist plant) medium sized woody shrub. Blooms on this year's growth so may have to be pruned back in early spring.

Catananche caerulea (Cupid's Dart). blue

Ceratostigma plumbaginoides (Leadplant groundcover) blue

Chelone glabra (Turtlehead) - pink. A big, rather coarse plant.

Chrysanthemum

Clematis terniflora (Sweet autumn clematis) To 20'. Fast growing and very aggressive.

Colchicum autumnale - foliage comes up in spring, blooms in the fall.

Coreopsis will have a second bloom in the fall if cut back after first bloom

Crocus speciosus (Fall blooming crocus)

Echinacea (Coneflower) hybrids last longer. "Cheyenne Spirit" comes in shades of yellow, orange and red and blooms from July through September

Echinops ritro (Globe Thistle)

Erodium (Alpine geranium) small scale pink or white groundcover

Eupatorium purpureum (Joe Pye Weed) "Little Joe" at 3-4' is smaller in scale than original.

Eupatorium rugosum 'Chocolate' (White snakeroot) Brownish foliage, white flowers.

Gentiana asclepiadea (Willow Gentian)- bright blue or white. Moist, peaty, acidic soil in part shade preferred.

Gentiana andrewsii (Bottle Gentian)- blue

Gentiana septemfida - blue

Helenium autumnale (Helen's Flower) tall, reds, yellows, orange.

Helianthus 'Lemon Queen' (Perennial Sunflower) 3-7', deer resistant

Heliopsis scabra (False sunflower)

Hibiscus - Blue Satin is a stunner in September.

Leucanthemum superbum "Alaska" (Shasta Daisy). A great shock of pure white.

Limonium latifolium (Sea Lavender)

Perovskia atriplicifolia (Russian Sage)

Phlox paniculata

Physostegia virginiana (Obedient Plant)

Platycodon grandiflorus (balloon flower)

Rudbeckia

Sedum - Autumn Joy is an old favourite but there are many new hybrids, even white (Iceberg)

Solidago rugosa (Goldenrod)

Tricyrtis hirta (Toad lily)

Grasses

Pennisetum alopecuroides (Hardy Fountain Grass)

Calamagrostis acutiflora "Karl Foerster"

Miscanthus sinensis

BOOKS

For those interested in Canadian Gardening History:

Edwinna von Baeyer's writings

- Down the Garden Path: A Guide for Researching the History of a Garden or Landscape , Ottawa: EvB Communications, 2007.
- Garden Voices: Two Centuries of Canadian Garden Writing, Toronto: Random House, 1995.
- Garden of Dreams: Kingsmere and Mackenzie King, Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990.
- Rhetoric and Roses: A History of Canadian Gardening, 1900-1930, Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984.

DID YOU KNOW

The Canada 150 Chair which was at our Horticultural Show and which has been touring the province, was painted by club member Shirley Marston's daughter, Vicki.

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 will be the Chair of the nominating committee, so let him know your interests or discuss the responsibilities with the current Chairs. Only through volunteers will our Club stay active and vital!

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 11, 2017 - Valley Gardener's annual corn boil, Wolfville Farmers Market. Meal starts at 6 pm, speaker at 7:30. Speaker is Sue Kerr from Wolfville on "Developing a New Garden", based on her own experience. Members are asked to bring cherry tomatoes and sliced cucumbers, your own home made relish and/or an easy to handle sweet. Workers should arrive at 5 to get things underway.

September 16, 2017 - The Friends of the Garden fall plant sale, Dalhousie Agricultural Campus, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Perennials, bulbs, and grasses.

September 20, 2017 - Al Whittle Theatre, Wolfville. 7:00 pm, \$9.00. In filmmaker Sébastien Chabot's feature debut, influential gardener and horticulturalist Frank Cabot recounts his personal quest for perfection at Les Quatre Vents, his twenty-acre English style garden and summer estate that was opened to a film crew for the first time ever, shortly before his passing at the age of 86. The Gardener is a documentary reflecting on the meaning of gardening and its impact on our lives.

LEAVES

A spell lies on the Garden.
 Summer sits
 With her finger to her lips as if she heard
 The steps of Autumn echo on the hill.
 -Gertrude Huntington McGiffert, American poet (1869-1962)

FROM THE GARDEN RECIPE BOX

So...the last crop of corn is approaching, and you can't resist. Of course, you always cook too much - a matter of eyes bigger than stomach when corn is concerned. Here is a great way to use up the last of the corn kernels for lunch the next day. Surprisingly fast and good. It is good enough to have a hankering for it mid winter (at which time canned corn will have to do - not as good).

CORN CAKES

Makes about 12 to serve as an hors d'oeuvre or 6 to serve as a main dish luncheon for 3.

1 cup all purpose flour

1 tsp baking powder

½ tsp salt

1 egg (egg white only if watching your cholesterol)

2/3 cup milk or a little less if using whole egg

1 cup fresh corn kernels or 1-7 oz. can of corn, drained

butter or oil

black pepper

1. Place flour, baking powder, salt, egg and milk in food processor with half the corn and process until smooth.
2. Season well with freshly ground black pepper and stir in remaining corn.
3. Heat frying pan and coat with oil or butter. Drop in tablespoons of batter and cook until set. Turn over the cakes and cook until the other side is golden.

Serve hot with tomato chutney. For lunch add a crisp mixed salad.

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: Janet Herbin. Secretary: Cinda Kaulkman. Treasurer: Gerri Robertson. Program Chair: Robin Whidden. Communications Chair: Donna Crawford.