

The GardenShed

WINTER 2019

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE APPLE COUNTRY GARDEN CLUB



BLANKET OF WHITE

Photo by Barrie Wood



The **GardenShed**

~ *From the Editor*

It seems like only yesterday that I was putting together my last GardenShed newsletter. The truth is, of course, that it has actually been quite a long while ... and quite a long journey, too.

And now here I am – in a new year, with new joints (one hip and two knees, to be precise) – just one old editor, returned from the fray. Thank you for welcoming me back, and thank you to Sharron, for adding the newsletter to her loooong list of jobs during my absence.

As you look through this Winter, 2019 issue, you'll discover that many of your fellow gardeners have submitted contributions for

your edification and enjoyment ... articles and recipes, a bit of wisdom here and a bit of humour there. Even in the dead of winter, it's amazing what the Apple Country Garden Club can accomplish when we all work together! Who knows, maybe you'll even be inspired to contribute something yourself to the Spring issue.

There is a lot of reading in this newsletter, so put on a pot of tea, light the fire and curl up with a furry friend. I hope you will find this GardenShed to be the perfect antidote to a grey, mid-winter, February day.

~ *Lorelyn*

~ *From the President*

Well I'm hunkered down in my subterranean shelter waiting for the "storm of the season" "snow-m-aggeddon", proof that what's his name south of the border is wrong about climate change, so I thought it would be an opportune time to put down a few words for our latest newsletter.

I'm really excited and, yes, somewhat intimidated by the prospect of leading the club through the next couple of years. After all I have some rather auspicious boots to fill. That being said, I hope that all of you had a wonderful Christmas and a happy new year and are



Sharron passes the presidential pin to Jim at the November AGM.



looking forward, as all gardeners do, to an early warm spring and a not too hot summer of gardening.

Now is the time for winter sowing, seed catalogue perusing, garden and landscaping planning, and pouring over those garden books that you have been planning to read since last fall or the ones that you received from Santa.

We started the year off with a bang with two great speakers at our first meeting. Denis Orendt of Blue Frog Water Gardens gave a very informative talk on ponds, waterscapes and water plants. I could see the planning in some of your eyes, counting the days until ground could be broken on a new water garden. I remember our waterfall/pond garden at our previous house and how restful it was.

Lorelyn Morgan also piqued everyone's interest in winter sowing. I wasn't too familiar with the ins and outs but she made it sound so easy and fool-proof that even I think I could succeed in growing seedlings. It sounds like an inexpensive, relatively easy way to fill up some empty or new garden space.

As I said at the January meeting the club has some very ambitious plans for the spring in addition to our very successful plant sale. We are planning to participate in the spring home and garden show again this year. It will be held

in April in Brighton and it would be great to steal away a few new members from our sister town down the highway. We will be passing out a sign-up sheet for volunteers to man the information table, help with the "Kids Activity Table", and sell memberships and maybe some early plantings. The show is on a Saturday afternoon. Watch for further information in February and March.

In May we are planning on having a help/information table at Rutherford's Market. We will need volunteers to man it for a couple of hours on a weekend, to offer advice about plants, and hopefully to sign up some new members. More on that in March and April.

Speaking of new members let me, on behalf of everyone, extend the warmest of welcomes to the new members who joined at the January meeting, Bryan & Olga Johnson and Catherine Kaye. We know you will enjoy yourselves and we hope that you participate in the various events and activities that the club sponsors and puts on. I know that you will meet a lot of great people in the club.

That's all from me for now. Good gardening everyone and may the sun always be on your back and the rain out of your garden shoes.

~ Jim



Your new Board of Directors: Shannon Shea, Len Salvati, Clare Breton, Cori Hall, Hans Leys, Clair Phillips, Trish O'Brien, Dennis Myluck from Brighton Hort, Karen Prins, Valerie Detenbeck, Jim Detenbeck, Sharron MacDonald, Kris Rahn, Peggy Howden, Fred Kurz & Suzie Kurz.



Here are write-ups from a couple of last fall's presentations that haven't yet made an appearance in the newsletter.

~~ September, 2018 Presentation ~~

KERRY HACKETT – MEDICAL HERBALIST

Members of the Apple Country Garden Club were pleased to welcome Kerry Hackett - Medical Herbalist – to our September meeting. Ms. Hackett has been a practitioner of herbal medicine for almost two decades. She is a member of the National Institute of Medical Herbalists (UK) and past president of the Ontario Herbalists' Association among other

affiliations. She has a diploma in Veterinary Homeopathy and has worked with domestic and wild animals. Ms. Hackett is also a certified Master Gardener and is currently studying towards an MSc in Herbal Medicine. Ms. Hackett believes strongly in Herbal Medicine “from the ground up”, seeding, growing, collecting and preserving plant medicines”.



Therefore, her organic formulas and preparations are made completely by hand and contain no chemical additives or preservatives. In addition, these whole plant remedies contain a fully balanced spectrum of medicinal components as created by nature, in harmony with the natural processes of the seasons, weather and environment. An herb is any plant with leaves, seeds or flowers used for flavouring food, creating medicine and/or perfume. In order to create your own herb garden, as a

precursor to beginning your own herbalist adventure, it is best to follow a formal design process (words, pictures and survey), that is, describe and decide what you want. Assess what you have and don't have. Then draw up a plan. As any professional planner will tell you, creating a stated “need” will ensure your focus, and will avoid you falling victim to the proclivity to follow that shiny thing. Also important and borrowed from the world of professional planning is the necessity to avoid “Black Hat”



thinking – no turning back, no self defeating prophecy – just keep calm and garden on.

Your formal design will begin with DECIDE. What is the end goal? Set your priorities. Use your imagination. For instance, will you plant for emphasis, balance, repetition, variety, or full-on exuberance?

Next, what goes into your WISH LIST? Is it to be your quiet space, are we going for the riotous look of an English garden or the formal gravitas of a parterre? Is it a secret garden, a source of fresh herbs for the kitchen, herbal teas and medicine, or an indulgence of your senses? What and where are the hardscape, pergolas, gazebos, and water features to go? Will you mix herbs with perennials or vegetables?

ASSESS WHAT YOU HAVE....DON'T HAVE. Is the space currently cultivated or do you have to remove grass? How big is the proposed garden in relation to the rest of the property? Is the soil loam, clay or sand? What zone are you in? Do you have pollinators? Do you want to bring back history growing specimen and heirloom plants? What are your resources – time, money, labour – and so on.

And add CONSIDERATIONS, for instance what is

your gardening experience, are you disabled, what is the distance from your garden to amenities – tools, shed, rain barrel, hose? Do you have electricity and water available? Ensure that your wish list meets reality and prioritize, prioritize, prioritize.

Finally, draw up the plan. If this seems a daunting task, consider that inspiration is everywhere! Magazines, books (go to used book shops, Boomers are culling their libraries), seed catalogues, neighbours, vacations in far off lands, garden shows, fabrics, paintings, crafts, delicious aromas, cookbooks, and too many more to list. Get some help – preferably strong and healthy – add the right tools, and bring your dream garden to life. There are few things in life that are as satisfying and, with the right herbal concoctions, there will be collateral joy!

Ms. Hackett left us with a bibliography:

Beyers D. (1999) *The Medicinal Garden*
 McIntyre Anne (1997) *The Medicinal Garden*
 McVicar J. (1994) *Herbs for the Home*
 Minter S. (1993) *The Healing Garden*
 Tollery E. and Meed C. (1985) *Herbs, Gardens, Decorations and Recipes*

Ms. Hackett can be reached at: (705) 696-1023

~ Robin Young



~~ October, 2018 Presentation ~~

VIKKI WHITNEY of GRIFFIN'S GREENHOUSES

Vikki Whitney helps run a family owned and operated greenhouse business near Peterborough. She is a much sought after lecturer, teacher and designer, someone who loves to pass on her expertise to others. The Apple Country Garden Club welcomed Vikki back, this time to demonstrate her signature Fall and Winter urns.

The successful urn is very much dependent on adaptation to the season, for example, a great winter planter should last from November to March and the autumn urn should look festive up to the first hard frost, usually close to Remembrance Day.

Next is the availability of planting material for each season – kale looks very pretty when frozen and the all important greens should be healthy and vibrant. The best urn material is balsam, Princess pine, Oregon cedar, BC cedar and fir, white and red pine and the list goes on.



Some years the boughs are abundant and beautiful, some years their struggle with adverse conditions is apparent. Be cautious when foraging for boughs and berries. For example small white berries near the ground are usually poison ivy. Some things growing in the wild are poisonous to pets so make sure you are familiar with the plant before you harvest it.



The adverse conditions range from ordinary to extraordinary and they can play havoc with plants, bushes and trees. Our most recent summer drought and the extraordinarily high water table a couple of years ago prove the point. This has a direct influence on the condition and volume of what is left in the garden at summer's end. Echinacea heads, Siberian iris pods, sedum, pine cones, fern fronds, dogwood, curly willow, sumac pods, Japanese kerria (bright green) and magnolia leaves are some of the decorative materials that show well in an urn.

Finally, what is your goal for creating an urn? Note the difference between "holiday" and "seasonal". Once the plant material is embedded in the planter and the winter is in full swing, the Christmas ornaments and other decorative additions to the greenery will be frozen solid, making extraction almost impossible. Make sure they are inserted on a stick that can be cut off after the holidays.



The size of a planter and the overall colour choice requires careful consideration. A large urn with many autumn-coloured elements will virtually disappear in front of a red brick house. Do a visual check from the street, is there a “punch” of colour (often white) to make your urn pop?

Vikki’s modus operandi is to use materials and methods that are in balance with nature, drawing from the bounty around us. However, she is not adverse to a little highlighting with craft paint to add zing to the arrangement. There is a wealth of material available in ditches, forests, and the garden, you just have to look around. The goal is to create a planter that is beautiful, practical and one that complements your property. And ideally one that lasts throughout the season for which it was created.



Only after all this has been taken into consideration does the technical work begin. First, and probably most important, is to make sure your planters are winter proof. We all know how brittle terra-cotta pots can be in extreme cold temperatures, so metal, plastic, concrete, resin/ fibreglass, wood, earthenware inside cast iron pots etc. are preferred. Next, start your winter planters while the soil is still malleable, usually in November. The addition of

an oasis in the bottom of the planter helps the boughs and decor items stay in their preferred position and will also maintain water which is necessary until the planter has frozen solid. Cut the branches, on an angle, to the size of the container, and insert them deep, alternating the type of bough for support and interest. Often the bough can be stripped of its branches by as much as 50% to achieve the desired look. Place the boughs from tall in the centre to small as you move outwards. Use BC cedar or silver fir to “droop” over the edges creating a pleasing and balanced display. At this point you can use dogwood, curly willow or birch “logs” to establish the highest point of the planter.

Another way to achieve balance is to put an odd number of boughs in the arrangement - 3 to 5 items rather than 2 to 4 for example. Once the greenery is balanced and beautiful, add the decorative features, keeping in mind the “seasonal” vs “holiday” look.

Griffin’s Greenhouse offers workshops to show you how to create beautiful urns in all seasons.

For more information contact Vikki at:
Griffin’s Greenhouses,
3026 Lakefield Road,
Peterborough ON
705 652 8638
info@griffinsgreenhouses.com



~ Robin Young



~~~ From One Gardener to Another ~~~

Here is my Bloom Report as of November 6, 2018: aconitum are in full bloom in three locations in my yard. The leaves look a little tattered but the flowers are good. One mauve and one deep purple delphinium are blooming again, tho with shorter stems than earlier in the year. The hot pink aster called 'Alma Potschke' is still blooming in two spots. My favourite little yellow fumitory is still blooming in many places. It will continue until a hard frost stops it for the year. Several tall phlox are still in bloom, and a few blue lithodora are still blooming in the rock garden. Purple and white hyssops are still blooming. In the big garden in the front yard, the salvias 'Carradonna' and 'Madeleine' are still blooming.



Aster 'Alma Potschke'

Two hanging baskets on my veranda still look great. I don't have the heart to take them apart yet. The big one is gorgeous still with red ivy geranium and upright geranium. The smaller one still has white geranium and red nasturtium blooming. When they are done in by the cold, I'll take them apart and put together a winter display in two or three of them.

December Report: I ended up doing three winter baskets. All have red twig dogwood, green branches from keria, lots of white pine branches and a few of yew as I was doing a little pruning on a yew shrub. (I figured, why waste the branches?) I also put in the lovely

white/beige plumes from my zebra grass and some rose hips.

A couple of years ago I purchased four VERY large cones from some exotic species. I paid an exorbitant price for them but they are spectacular. I use two in each of the two baskets that are most visible out the windows. When spring comes I pack them away out of the weather till next time. They are still like new, so I guess over time and many re-uses they will prove to not be so costly. I picked up some very inexpensive Christmas 'wand' decorations at a thrift shop in Cobourg, so I did a different colour theme in each basket: one is red, one is gold and one is silver and white. Very nice!

Even now, as of this writing on January 27, 2019, the baskets still look good. I generally let them stay until spring arrives.

I made out two seed orders today, one to OSC and one to Vesey's. Check out page 99 in Vesey's catalogue for a gorgeous new viola 'Tiger Eye Orange', and page 87 for a lovely new pale yellow cosmos, 'Xanthos'. I ordered both.

I had a trip to Peterborough yesterday. The ground was all covered in white, of course, but I was struck again by all the different shades of brown at this time of year – beige, light brown, dark brown, rusty colours and many others for which I don't have names. When I got home, I checked out the beauty of my own place. I leave most plants standing for the winter in order to provide interest.

In my own yard, for some more winter colour this year, I put a few brightly coloured Christmas balls on my magnolia tree. It's in the front yard, fairly close to the house so it's easy to see out the window. Further down the yard closer to the road I have a lovely contorted pine tree. This year I put a large red bow on it. I told



friends and family that it was a Christmas wishing tree. Several of them went there to touch the tree and make a wish. It's been fun, and pretty to look at, too.

There is something else I do for some colour in the winter garden. Visible from the east living room window, I have a tall blue delphinium that blooms fairly reliably. I often use lengths of metal rebar as stakes for certain tall plants. When I put in the delphinium, I put in 3 stakes that I had painted blue. They are in sort of a wide triangle that I wrap with a bit of twine. This allows space for the stems to grow up and move a little but not get broken by the wind. And in the winter, I look out and see some lovely blue colour. It's a bonus!

I bought a big bag of orchid potting mix the other day. I have a few small ones that need stepping up to a larger pot. And I've got one



In the middle of winter, when the winds blow dark bare branches, and spring seems so far away, the green we crave can be all around. When I wake in the morning of a crisp sunny day, the green cedars moving in a breeze seem almost tropical against a blue sky. Much maligned, they keep our winter landscape lush and provide small birds with a warm shelter.

More loved evergreens, such as pine and spruce, soften the gardens and brighten our day with snow-decorated branches. My little spruce was gently tugged from a roadside, rescued and brought home like a stray kitten. It is exciting to watch its steady growth, wondering if it is blue or green, like a parent guessing eye color. Although we will not be

crazy green Phalaenopsis that has been in continuous bloom since March of 2017! It has been staked and re-staked a few times, but it's still climbing out of the pot. It has numerous aerial roots and the old stem has one fully open flower and at least three buds to come. It is now growing another flower spike, so it's not going to stop blooming any time soon. I may harm it by re-potting and burying the aerial roots but I'm going to do it anyway. It was my understanding that many orchids can bloom for several months but then need a rest period before they bloom again. All my other ones behave that way, but obviously this one didn't read the gardening books. I hope I don't kill it by burying the roots because it is my favorite. Wish me luck!

All for now.

~ Peg Howden

A Touch of Green: In Praise of Conifers

here to see it full grown, I hope that the next gardeners enjoy its year-round beauty and light it for Christmas cheer.

While the euonymus shrivels in the cold, the yew stands dark and green. We have tried to tame its size but the stubborn yew reaches for the eaves. Birds and squirrels in its branches, toads buried deep beneath, a warm place to call home.

Maples and oaks may give glorious autumn color and fill our skies with beauty, but when the leaves fall, evergreens fill our winter with the colors of summer!

~ Valerie Detenbeck



~~~ The Gardener's Companion ~~~

The musings and words of wisdom below are taken from the c.1989 Gardener's Companion left by Master Gardener Elya Chestnut for the future caretakers of her own gardens, at what is now the property of Jim & Valerie Detenbeck.

January

- It's a new year and hope springs eternal. Now is the time to pour over those seed and plant catalogues arriving in the mail and to order early so as to get the best specimens. Have the companies deliver them as their planting season rolls around.
- It is also wise to do a thorough inspection of your garden tool box. Replace any broken or worn out implements with the best money can buy. Get everything sharpened, especially garden shears and scissors.

February

- Complete your planting plans and get the final seed and plant order in. Always use reputable suppliers who will replace non-performing specimens.
- As weather permits, start daily walk-arounds in the garden, picking up wind-fall sticks and winter debris. Cast a critical eye on your trees for tell-tale branch and trunk damage.
- In late February start to work on your shrubberies, gently raking out loose leaves and twigs.

March

- Time for the heavy work to begin. Firstly always warm up and stretch. (Jim's suggestion, not Ms. Chestnut's).
- Start to take the leaves off of all the gardens. Be careful not to go too deep and disturb any bulb shoots now forming. The leaves can be mixed with compost and spread thinly over the gardens once the tender bulb shoots are up an inch or so.
- Instead of roaring ahead, the "gardener-in-chief" should take time for a leisurely daily stroll around the gardens and observe. This will help to plan what has to be done. Take notes.
- Plan and lay out any new planting areas and do initial spade work.
- Take time to do these chores as they are a good way to get reacquainted with the gardens.
- In late March early April, after snow is gone apply first fertilizer to lawns
- If required (every 5 years) arrange for tree maintenance. Use professionals, do not attempt yourself.

~ Submitted by Jim Detenbeck



Q - How many of these trophies did Val Detenbeck win? A - Just about all of them!



~~~ Giggles from the Garden ~~~

Lots of people have them and there is no shame in that. You can get them without trying, in fact it's your relatives who do the heavy lifting. They are long-lasting, and have a wide range of characteristics and abilities (more on that later). They have now also become perhaps the last acceptable target for humour and ridicule in movies and TV shows. Think Uncle Buck, (in fact anything with John Candy), or Joe Pesce, or the big guy with the low voice in *Everybody Loves Raymond*, the list goes on.

I am speaking of course of . . . the Brother-in-Law. The BIL. Your spouse's brother, or your sibling's spouse, either way. Stereotypically, these loveable lugs can be counted on to 1) borrow your lawn mower, and return it devoid of gas at best, or with a badly chipped blade at worst. 2) borrow \$50.00, and lose track of the second payment of \$25.00 that would be "by Wednesday latest!" 3) have an unerring sense of when dinner will hit the table at your house, even though your eating schedule varies wildly. 4) be unavailable when an extra hand is needed to accomplish a nasty task at your house. 5) screw up every task that follows your giving of flawless advice, help, or even materials. This is only a partial list. What I am about to confess is this: I am my brother's brother-in-law. Let me repeat that: I am my own brother's brother-in-law, at least as far as function is concerned – especially as in #5) above.

My brother is older by 4.5 years, happily married for many years, has three really cool boys now in their forties, retired ridiculously early from a non-fulfilling job because he wanted to, is conducting his retirement precisely as he planned to. His main events are tennis and gardening. He has kept up the former by playing hard singles thrice weekly, six-plus months of the year. As for the second, well, my Horty Friends, this is the subject of this

already windy piece. My brother is a top-rate FOOD gardener. He cares not a jot for green lawns, weeds in flower gardens, or even flowers in flower gardens. His motto: If you can't eat it, ignore it. We talk gardening quite a bit. To wit:

Brother: How's the garden?

Me: Oh, not too bad.

B: Have you planted those early greens yet? Frost is past, I think.

Me: Yeh, it is, but ah, I haven't got the spinach in yet. Still haven't turned over that bed, in fact.

B: Oh . . . How tall are your tomato seedlings?

Me: Well, I'd have to check with Reg Herron on Church Street, 'cuz I didn't get mine started on time – again. Reg has a great selection.

B: Oh . . . I thought you saved seed from those Brandywines I gave you last summer?

Me: Oh I did! They are still in that repurposed Hydro One envelope on the shelf.

B: Ookay. Are you raising any beans for drying? I think I gave you quite a few kidney and navy beans for seed a few years ago.

Me: Yes, you did. Thanks. I, ah, kind of lost track of them in the "old seeds" box. Likely not viable after uh, all that time. So I ate them.

B: You ate the seeds.

Me: They were really good. I tried a new recipe, and...

B: Did you get that new vegetable patch turned over?

Me: No, but we staked the peonies, pruned the roses, and polished the iris leaves, putting a little green dye on some of them so that they are all exactly the same shade of green.

B: Wow. Can you eat irises?

Me: You can likely steam the roots, but I'm betting they're not very good. Possibly poisonous. But you can look at them!

B: Oh. (long silence) Well, I gotta go, playing a late tennis game today.

Me: Um, isn't it only 7:30 am?



B: Yup. I got 2 hours in the garden before you called.
Bye!

Me: Bye. (silent sobbing)

Starting to get the picture? A partial list of Brother-in-Lawness on my part would go something like this: Brother gives me lovely basket of sweet potatoes from his awesome fall harvest, in addition to four of the vines to keep alive until early summer planting into garden. SO . . . the potatoes make good eating, losing only one to inadequate storage conditions, but the vines develop some kind of infection/infestation/strange-need-to-be-watered, that leads to their demise before Ukrainian Christmas. Other years they have made it into the ground, but subsequently been carried off by the Lakeport Scourge, the less said about which, the better.

Upon departure from visiting Brother, our trunk is always loaded up with extra produce from his hard-working garden. Upon Brother's departing our house, his trunk is loaded with good wishes and "Let's do this again soon!"

Last summer, Brother had the time and patience, when his gardening work days were done, to slowly encourage a chickadee to sit on his hand and pluck a seed from his teeth. I have trouble getting the cats – who rely on me for food, water and shelter – to tolerate me beyond the cold stare, no matter how much gardening I've done. Or maybe because of the gardening I HAVEN'T done.

Of course I love my brother, and despite all of the above, I believe he loves me back. Why else would he ... oh ... so many things. I am competent and confident in many things, or at least a few, but if I ever feel a little smug, I take a walk in my vegetable garden and think of what's happening a couple of hours away, where he who shares much of my DNA casually takes care of business – and dines IN on the results. And I smile ... in spite of being a Brother-in-Law to my own Brother.

~ *Barrie Wood*



Garden to Table

Irish Colcannon

3 cups green cabbage (thinly sliced)

6 green onions

6 med potatoes

2 tbsp butter

½ cup milk

Salt & pepper

1. Peel & boil potatoes, drain & mash with the milk & butter
2. Boil cabbage with ½ tsp salt 3-5 mins (drain)
3. Stir cooked cabbage & chopped onions into the mashed potatoes

4. Season with salt & pepper... add pat of butter to melt over

German Red Cabbage

½ red cabbage, thinly sliced

2 tbsp butter

2 tbsp brown sugar

¼ cup balsamic vinegar

Coarse salt

Fresh ground pepper

1. Sauté cabbage in butter until wilted
2. Add remainder & stir.
3. Cover & simmer 30 mins



Cranberry Bread

2 cups cranberries
 2 tbsp lemon zest
 2 cups all purpose flour
 4 tsp baking powder
 1 tsp salt
 1+2/3 cups sugar
 2 tsp vanilla
 ½ cup walnuts
 4 eggs
 2/3 cup vegetable oil
 ½ cup milk

1. Grease 2 loaf pans
2. Mix cranberries, sugar, oil, milk, zest, vanilla & eggs
3. Stir in remaining ingredients
4. Pour into greased pans
5. Bake 50-60 mins at 350 degrees
6. Check that toothpick comes out clean.
7. Cool 10 mins ...loosen sides.
Cool completely on rack before slicing

Winter Sausage & Brussels Sprouts

1 lb smoked beef sausage cut into ½ inch rounds
 1 lb Brussels sprouts, halved
 1 lb sweet potatoes in one inch cubes
 Salt & pepper
 2 tbsp olive oil
 4 tbsp Maple Syrup

1. Preheat oven 400 degrees
2. Line baking sheet with parchment
3. Mix all together in bowl (except salt & pepper)
4. Spread onto baking sheet, sprinkle with salt & pepper
5. Bake 30 mins until potatoes are soft (stir up twice)

~ Karen Prins

~~~ Winter Sowing ~~~

Winter sowing is a method of starting seeds which relies on nature to cause the seeds to germinate. In nature, germination is triggered by the combination of temperature fluctuation (especially freezing and thawing), snowmelt, and increasing day length. To winter sow, you make a mini-greenhouse out of a makeshift container, sow the seeds in some dirt inside of it, and stick the whole thing outside on a winter's day to let nature take its course.

Winter sowing is not a new idea; it has apparently been used in Europe for centuries. In some places it's also known as Solstice sowing, and people do it ceremonially at Solstice as an affirmation that 'even on the darkest day of the year, even in the very deepest of sleep, the Earth is getting ready to awaken'.

The ideal time to winter sow in our climate is during the coldest months of January and February, though I've done it successfully as late as mid-March. Daydreaming over a seed catalogue on a snowy January day is lovely, but planting a container full of seeds and offering them up to nature on that same snowy day is somehow a very concrete affirmation of one's connection with – and faith in – the forces of nature. It's also a pretty lazy and inexpensive way to generate hundreds of new plants and I highly recommend it.

You can use a wide variety of containers – I use plastic shoeboxes purchased on sale for 88 cents each from Home Depot. People use plastic juice or pop bottles with a 'lid' sliced off, plastic or foil lidded take-out containers, dollar store planting trays that come with a plastic lid



... you can even use regular plastic pots with plastic wrap fastened firmly ovetop or fastened inside a firmly closed plastic bag. As long as the bottom part is at least 2 inches deep and the top is clear and you can poke holes into it, your container will work. Once you've chosen your container, you will need to poke drainage holes in the bottom and a few holes for air ventilation in the top.



Ready for the seeds.

I use ordinary potting soil, the cheapest I can find. Some people say to use seed starting soil or jiffy pellets or special 'magic' soil recipes, but I've found this is not necessary. Pour soil about 1½ inches deep into the container. Mix it with water till it is well dampened but not goopy. I don rubber gloves and squeeze the water into the soil by hand. I usually plant one entire package of seeds per shoe box. Scatter the seeds as evenly as possible over the soil, then cover them thinly with a handful of dry soil and pat down. Extremely small seeds or seeds that need light to germinate won't have to be covered. If the seeds are large or have a very thick shell, you can soak them overnight first. Once the seeds are planted, mist the surface with a spray bottle to make sure it's evenly moist (not soggy). Make sure to label what you've planted. After trying a few different methods, I've found pencil on popsicle sticks to be most durable. Finally, fasten the lids on securely, using heavy tape if necessary to hold them in place as they're buffeted by the elements.

Put your containers outside and let nature take its course. It might be tempting to put them on steps or a picnic table because you can reach them more easily, but I've had boxes blow off (and upside down) in a winter gale, so I recommend placing them on the ground up against a wall. The containers need to become covered in snow in order for the seeds to germinate, so if your location is protected by eaves from snowfall, whenever it snows you will have to manually dump some snow onto them. Also, make sure they are not under the drip line from the eaves or they'll get too wet and rot.



Seeds sown in shoeboxes, under the snow.

In late winter or early spring you should see the occasional little green guys poking up. This will happen gradually over a period of a few weeks and for any die-hard gardener, this is pretty exciting stuff at the end of a long winter.

At this point you need to be careful that the seedlings don't dry out or get scorched. Functionally, the containers now have to act more like cold frames than greenhouses. You can increase the size of the ventilation holes and/or remove the lids for short periods at midday when the sun is stronger – but you also need to return the lid securely overnight or during periods of colder weather. You also need to water as required to prevent the soil from drying out. If your containers have spent the winter on a south or west wall, you might want to move them to a north or east wall now.

The seedlings can be transplanted directly into the garden when they get their second set of



leaves (ie first true leaves) or you can wait till they begin to hit the lid of the container. (For some large plants, like sunflowers, these two things happen at about the same time.) Once they hit the lid, it's probably warm enough to just remove it for a few days until you're ready to transplant, but they will dry out quickly now so keep them well watered.



Lids off on a sunny day

It's best to do your planting out into the garden on a cloudy day so the sun doesn't immediately fry the tiny seedlings. They will be much, much tinier than seedlings started in a greenhouse or under grow lights. They won't be likely prospects for the plant sale at the end of May because they don't look very appealing at this point, and would be a pretty hard sell. However, they will catch up in a month or so in the garden, and turn into strong, hardy plants.

Some seeds are harder to germinate than others, and you may find you have a container in which not one single seed has sprouted by the time all the other containers are ready to be planted. It's likely that these seeds will still eventually germinate and if you have the patience you can move the containers to a north wall and keep watering them to see what happens. In nature, perennial seeds might wait for ideal conditions and not germinate for years. I usually think I'm going to keep nurturing these ungerminated seeds and then somehow in the mad rush of spring gardening I forget to water the containers, and ... oh well

This winter sowing method will potentially work with any zone-appropriate annual or perennial

that can be grown from seed. Don't expect it to work with hybrids or with plants that are usually propagated by cuttings. It will never work with plants that we 'grow as annuals' but that are actually tropical perennials.



Basil sown in March. Soooooo much pesto potential!

We have also successfully used this method to start many different veggies, which saves much muss and fuss in the house. At transplanting time, the seedlings are minuscule compared to anything you will grow indoors or buy at Rutherford's, but our experience is that they will grow into extremely hardy plants that will yield equally well or better than their more coddled neighbours. This year we plan to sow these veggies in January: broccoli, chard, kale, leeks, bunching onion, peas and spinach. (Obviously, cold-loving salad greens could also be winter sown now, but we prefer to just direct-sow them in April.) More tender vegetables can be sown later, in mid-March, though if the temperatures go extremely low, protect them overnight with a blanket: basil, beets, carrots, cucumbers, parsley and zucchini. We have sown all of our veggies successfully in March, but some gardeners recommend a third sowing of even more tender veggies in early April: eggplant, peppers, tomatoes and melons.

At time of writing in early January, I've got everything I need – soil, containers and seeds – ready and waiting to begin winter sowing. I am probably the only person I know right now who is anxiously wishing for snow, the one missing ingredient for successful winter sowing.

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.

~ Lorelyn Morgan



~~~ Feed the Birds ~~~

Workshops with the kids at the Castleton and Colborne Libraries during Christmas break were well-attended and fun! In November and December, the kids also learned how to make Christmas villages and orange house smellies.



~~ Over the Garden Fence ~~~ (Neighbouring Horticultural Societies)

Brighton Horticulture meets at King Edward Community Centre, 81 Elizabeth St. 4th Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm.

Campbellford Horticulture meets at Christ Church Anglican, Kent & Church Streets, Campbellford, 1st Monday of the month at 7:30pm.

Cobourg Horticulture meets at Cobourg Columbus Community Centre, 232 Spencer Street East (D'Arcy), 1st Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm. Upcoming meetings: Feb 6, **Dennis Orendt**, *Water: Nature's Stress Reliever*; Mar 6, **Rory Quigley**, *The Urban Forest*; Apr 3, **Sean James**, *Fusion Gardening*.

Grafton Horticulture meets at St. Andrews United Church, 137 Old Danforth Rd., 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm. Upcoming meetings: Feb 12, **Leslie Abrams**, *Small Creatures in Our Gardens*; Mar 12, **Bev Silk**, *Miniature Design Workshop*; Apr 9, **Susan Antler** (Compost Council of Canada), *The Wonderful World of Soil Health*.

Omeme Blooms Garden Club meets at Trinity United Church, 3rd Monday of the month, 7:30 p.m.

Peterborough Horticulture meets at the Lions' Centre, 347 Burnham St., Peterborough, 4th Wednesday of the month, 7:00 p.m. Upcoming meetings: Feb 27, **Julie Moore**, *Landscape Designs: The Good, the Bad & the Ugly*; Mar 27, **Garry Edwards**, *Propagating Garden Plants*; Apr 24, **Dawn Golloher**, *New 2019 Easy-Care Perennials*.

Port Hope & District Horticulture meets at the Ruth Clarke Centre, 81 Mill St. S., 2nd Monday of the Month at 7:00 pm.

CANADA BLOOMS March 8 – 17 canadablooms.com

PETERBOROUGH GARDEN SHOW April 26, 27, 28 peterboroughgardenshow.com



~~ Please Join Us ...

... on *facebook* or online at cramahehort.ca

... or at a meeting - on the 3rd Tuesday of the month in the Keeler Centre in Colborne.

Next meeting:

Tuesday, Feb. 19^{th st}, 1:30 pm

'A Victorian Kitchen Garden'

with Edwards of Meadow View Gardens

Upcoming:

Tuesday, March 19th, 1:30

**Landscaping: The Good, The Bad
and The Ugly**

with Gary and Dianne Westlake

Tuesday, April 16th, 7:00 pm

Invasive Plants

with Vicki Simkovic

of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council

The Apple Country Garden Club

President: **Jim Detenbeck**
detenbeckgary@gmail.com

Secretary: **Trish O'Brien**
twillow_51@hotmail.com

Treasurer: **Clair Breton**
clairbreton@bell.net

Newsletter: **Lorelyn Morgan**
lgm@sympatico.ca



The white way of delight. Photo by Barrie Wood

*Growing our
community*

.....

*one garden
at a time.*

