



The Ladyslipper



Perth & District Horticultural Society

www.perthhortsociety.com

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Est. 1984

P.O. Box 494
Perth, ON K7H 3G1
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President's Pen

Wow, garden season is just around the corner. The red zinnia seeds are planted, the Dahlia tubers are sorted and ready to put in pots to give them a head start, and many more new ones ordered for this year.

This month's meeting is on Zoom once again due to the increased wave of Covid and to keep everyone safe and healthy. Hopefully we will meet in-person again in May.

Our speaker for the May 10th meeting will be Candace Dressler and the topic will be "Colour Through the Seasons with Perennials." Using layering, succession planting, and choosing plants with a long bloom period will keep your perennial garden bright all year. Candace will discuss the techniques and plants that have given her success and a colourful garden all year.

We plan to have a mini flower show in May. A schedule will be sent out shortly to all members.

We are putting the final plans together for our Annual Plant sale for the long-weekend in May, so when you are out digging in your gardens, please pot up a few plants for the society.

Plant Red for Year of the Garden 2022. *Why plant red during the Year of the Garden?* Plant Red to pay tribute to lives lost during the pandemic, to honour frontline workers, or to simply express your Canadian Garden Pride!

Linda

CLEMATIS

Are you wondering when you should prune clematis? Wonder no more! Follow the chart below for the different types of clematis.



	 1	 2	 3
Group			
Flower Time	Spring	Early Summer & repeat blooms	Late Summer
Flowers on	Old Wood	Old & New Wood	New Wood
When To Prune	After Flowering (Summer)	After Flowering (Fall/Winter)	After Flowering (Winter/Spring)
Notes	No pruning OR Lightly prune dead wood if needed	Remove dead wood OR Cut whole plant down to 12" every few years	Prune hard leaving 6-12" above ground with strong buds

Mini-hoop Tunnels Boost Veggie Production

By Niki Jabbour for Garden Making Magazine www.gardenmaking.com



*Mini hoops extend the season for growing vegetables
(Photo by Niki Jabbour)*

When it comes to boosting production in a vegetable garden, the versatility of mini-hoop tunnels can't be overstated. Though commonly used to stretch the harvest season into late autumn and winter, mini-hoop tunnels have an important place in the spring and summer garden. These simple structures can be used to pre-warm soil, shelter early planted crops or provide shade for bolt-prone vegetables such as lettuce and arugula in the heat of summer. Depending on the width of the bed and the materials used to construct the hoops, a mini tunnel is generally two to three feet (60 to 90 cm) tall at its highest point and can be as long as required.

Pre-warm the Soil

Many vegetables benefit from a pre-warming of the soil, which boosts germination rates of direct-seeded crops and reduces transplant stress for seedlings. Mini-hoop tunnels that had sheltered winter crops can be left in place, or new ones can be erected as early as possible in spring to capture solar energy and warm the soil before planting. Allow at least two weeks for loam-based garden soil to warm and up to six weeks for clay-based soils.

Accommodate Early Planting

Depending on the crop, a mini-hoop tunnel will enable you to plant seeds or seedlings two to eight weeks before the last expected spring frost, significantly earlier than if planted in open garden beds. Cool- and cold-season vegetables, such as broccoli, kale, and carrots, can be direct-seeded or transplanted beneath the shelter of a tunnel four to eight weeks earlier, while warm-season crops, like tomatoes, artichokes, and peppers, are best

planted just two to four weeks before the last frost. The temperature inside a mini-hoop tunnel can rise quickly, even on cloudy days. Open the ends for venting when temperatures are above 4°C.

Create Shade in Summer

With the first hint of summer, many cool- and cold-season salad greens, such as spinach and lettuce, quickly bolt, causing the leaves to become bitter and unpalatable. If sheltered from the sun and given ample moisture, however, these greens will continue to crop into summer. The easiest way to provide shade is to remove the plastic and float a length of shade cloth on top of the hoops of your tunnel.

Mini-hoop Tunnel How-to

Mini-hoop tunnels can be bought as kits, or you can make your own out of a variety of easily sourced materials. For my tunnels, I use 10-foot lengths of ½-inch-diameter PVC pipe, one-foot lengths of rebar and 6-mil greenhouse poly, which is long-lasting and durable.

Pound the rebar stakes six to seven inches (15-18 cm) into the ground, spacing them about three feet (90 cm) apart, along the length of the bed. Repeat on the other side so that the stakes are opposite each other and parallel. Take a 10-foot length of PVC and slip each end over two opposite rebar stakes. This creates a hoop to support the length of plastic, row cover or shade cloth. Once the covering is in place, secure it with clips or weight it down with rocks, logs, or sandbags.

Even if you don't plan on using your mini-hoop tunnels for winter harvesting, consider constructing the framework of the tunnel in late autumn to save you time and frustration in the spring, when muddy or still-frozen soil can make it difficult to insert the stakes into the ground.

Mini-hoop Planting Schedule

Cool- and cold-season crops: Plant these six to eight weeks before the last expected spring frost: Cabbage, Broccoli, Kale, Lettuce, Spinach, Beets, Carrots

Warm-season crops: Plant these two to four weeks before the last expected spring frost: Artichokes, Tomatoes, Peppers, Eggplants, Melons

Planning for Lettuce from Spring to Fall

By Susan Littlefield for The National Garden Association www.garden.org

The first homegrown salad of the season is an eagerly awaited treat, made from tender lettuce picked fresh from the garden. As long as hungry rabbits and woodchucks don't beat us to the harvest, spring planted lettuce is usually a trouble-free crop in most parts of the country. Lettuce growing gets a little more challenging as summer heat arrives, but with some planning and proper selection of varieties, many of us can still enjoy a summer salad from our garden even as the temperatures rise. And with a bit more planning in mid to late summer, the harvest can continue into the fall, possibly even into the winter months. So, lettuce get growing!

The days when lettuce in a salad meant a wedge of iceberg lettuce are long gone. There is an amazing range of lettuces you can grow, from tender butterheads and frilly leaf lettuces to crispy romaines and – yes – even heads of iceberg. Also long gone is the notion that lettuce doesn't have much to offer in the nutrition department. Like other leafy greens, lettuce, especially dark green types like romaine, is a good source of healthful antioxidants, folate, and vitamins A and K – all for very few calories.

Lettuce is also a great crop to consider if saving money is part of your reason for cultivating a home vegetable garden. Check out the price of spring greens salad mix next time you're at your local market. For about the price of one pound of these greens, you can probably buy enough lettuce seeds to satisfy the salad cravings of your entire family all season long. And your lettuce will be at the peak of freshness when it's harvested at home.

Types of Lettuce

Leaf lettuces are among the quickest and easiest lettuces to grow, with some varieties ready for harvest in just a month and a half. This non-heading type of lettuce can be harvested by picking individual leaves or by cutting the entire plant. Leafy varieties are also some of the prettiest

lettuces you can grow. Leaves may be frilly, deeply lobed, or smooth, and green or red in color.

Romaine lettuce, also called cos, forms loose, upright heads of crisp, elongated, dark green or red leaves that are tops among lettuces in the



nutrition department. The essential ingredient for Caesar salad, romaine is also delicious grilled. Harvest the lettuce so that the heads stay together; then cut the heads in half lengthwise and brush them with vinaigrette dressing. Grill until lightly browned all over for a tasty, but unusual vegetable.

Butterhead lettuce forms loose heads of succulent, tender leaves. Also called Bibb or Boston lettuce, these are the easiest head lettuces to grow. Some varieties have very soft leaves, while others, often referred to as summer crisp varieties, have a crisp, juicy texture.

Head lettuce, also called crisphead lettuce, includes the familiar Iceberg lettuce. The crisp, juicy leaves of these varieties taste great in salads, but this type is the most challenging for most home gardeners to grow. It needs a long growing season of cool weather to do best. Look for newer cultivars that are more tolerant of higher temperatures during the growing season.

Tips for Growing Lettuce

Begin Planting in Early Spring. For the earliest harvest, you can plant lettuce seeds indoors about 4 weeks before it's time to set hardened off transplants out, which can be as early as 4 weeks before the last spring frost date in your area. You can begin direct seeding as soon as your soil can be worked in the spring. For early spring planted crops select varieties that mature quickly so plants are ready to harvest before the weather gets hot.

Sow Small Amounts Frequently. Lettuce does not store well, so plant a small amount every 7-10 days. This way you'll have a continuous harvest, but you won't be left wondering how you're going to eat ten heads of lettuce at once!

Choose Heat Tolerant Varieties for Summer Harvest. For late spring and early summer planting, select varieties that have been bred for heat tolerance. Look for varieties that resist bolting and tipburn. Plant summer lettuce where it will get some shade from taller or trellised crops or erect a shade cloth cover over the lettuce bed. Make sure lettuce plants have consistently moist soil, especially when the weather is hot.

Plan Ahead for Fall Harvests

To figure out when to start plants for fall harvest, note the days to maturity listed on the seed packet. Lettuce grows well in the cool days of fall, but grows more slowly as days get shorter, so add about 14 more days to this number. This will be the number of days to count back from your average fall frost date to arrive at your planting date. Mature lettuce plants are more sensitive to freezing temperatures than small transplants, but if you provide some protection with row covers or a cold frame, you can extend your harvest season longer into the fall. Also, select varieties that have been bred for cold tolerance.

One problem you may run into is that the soil is still too hot for good lettuce seed germination in late summer when the fall crop needs to be started. Try starting seeds indoors in a cool spot or shading the planting bed prior to seeding so the soil is cooler when the seeds go in the ground.

Watch Out for Rabbits

Of course, rabbits will happily feed on many veggies in your garden, but they seem to regard lettuce as an all-you-can-eat salad bar planted for their benefit. If rabbits are a problem in your garden, a 2-foot high, small gauge wire fence is the best way to keep them out. Extend another foot of the fencing below ground, with 6 inches going straight down vertically and 6 inches bent away from the garden at a right angle (like an underground L-shape) to prevent rabbits from digging under.

Use Row Covers to Exclude Pests

Aphids feeding on lettuce can cause leaves to turn yellow and become distorted, and they may also transmit virus diseases. Cabbage loopers and other caterpillars, slugs, and birds also find lettuce appetizing. Covering the lettuce bed with lightweight row covers excludes many pests. Be sure the edges are well-sealed where they meet the soil to prevent any interlopers from sneaking under.

Book of the Month: The Art of Flower Gardening- A Gardener's Guide to Growing Flowers from Today's Favorites to Unusual Varieties



by Matt Mattus

Source: Goodreads. Also recommended by Canada's Garden Making magazine. Book first published March 2020. 240 page hardcover available through Amazon for \$36.13

A comprehensive and highly practical study of the art of growing

flowers, *Mastering the Art of Flower Gardening* presents expert tips on growing both annuals and biennials alongside hundreds of lush photographs. This gorgeously illustrated book by Matt Mattus is based on decades of first-hand experience in his own garden and greenhouse made popular on his blog *Growing with Plants*. Every variety or species presented is one that he has personally trialed and grown. Mattus sets you up for success by providing everything you need to know about starting seeds, soil, sowing, hardening off, to transplanting, and growing on. Then, in the following chapters, you'll find tips for growing over 100 different annuals from seed and many summer bulbs, vines like wisteria and even blooming shrubs like lilacs. Every flower includes detailed information based on his hands-on experience, going beyond the information typically available on the seed packet or a nursery tag. Learn details and cultural facts that will help you grow better flowers while introducing you to many more. You'll find tips for topics like how to grow challenging annual poppies and biennials from seed and forcing flowers for winter blooms. Just a small selection of the flowers covered: heirloom and exhibition chrysanthemums, larkspurs and annual poppies, delphiniums, peonies, lilacs and wisteria. Bulbs include spring and summer bulbs such as anemone, ranunculus, tulips, lilies, gladiolus, and cut flower dahlias, while winter indoor bulbs cover every aspect of forcing bulbs indoors like narcissus, amaryllis, South African bulbs--and even how to force Lily of the Valley. In short, there is nothing ordinary about this book—it ***is unlike any other cut flower book you will find.***