January February 2019 Newsletter

From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens - the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye.

- Katherine S. White

Upcoming

The March meeting of PDHS will be on Tuesday, March 12, 7p.m. at St. Paul's United Church. Our speaker will be Carol Onion from Hillside Gardens speaking on new varieties for 2019.

Seedy Sunday

Seedy Saturdays and Sundays take place across Canada in January, February and March. Many are free admittance and all are fun. You can swap and exchange seeds and buy seeds from suppliers and meet with fellow gardeners. Many Seedy days have free gardening seminars. In Lanark County, your local Master Gardener group is on hand to answer your gardening questions. Perth has its event on Sunday, March 3 at the Perth Civitan Club. To find other Seedy events, visit the Seeds of Diversity website.

AAS Annual Flowers 2019

Dr. Leonard Perry

Each year the best of the new annual flowers (those that only live for one year) are judged, and the winners given the All-America Selections (AAS) designation. This year's annual flower winners, grown from seeds, include a wax-leaf begonia, an American marigold, a nasturtium, and a new Wave petunia.

Begonia Viking XL Red on Chocolate is a wax leaf begonia, with large dark bronze (hence the "chocolate" name) leaves and red flowers through the summer. Under good conditions it can form a mound 30 inches or so high and wide, so space plants apart about this distance. Or, it can be grown in a large container. The main feature of this begonia is its glossy dark foliage through the season, which is darker than similar begonias. Plants bloom best in full to part sun.

Big Duck Gold is a new marigold—the type often called African, American, Mexican (from where this type was originally found), or Aztec marigold. The three-inch wide gold flowers are held on top of the compact, 15-inch plants through the season—longer than comparable marigolds. Leaves are a nice, deep green. Similar to other marigolds, and most annual flowers, this one needs full sun to grow and bloom best. Space plants 15 to 18 inches apart, and use them as a mini hedge along walks, massed in beds, mixed in with perennials for color all summer, or in containers.

Baby Rose is a new nasturtium—the first All-America Selections winner of this flower since

Newsletter: Irene Hofmann

Lanark Orchid Renals

Perth & District Horticultural Society

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District #2 of the Ontario Horticultural Association

the 1930s. Some nasturtiums are trailing and vining, but most are compact and mounding, such as this one. Space plants about 18 inches apart, in full to part sun. Their rose-colored flowers are a less common color for nasturtiums. Flowers bloom all summer and, unlike many nasturtiums, don't hide among the dark green leaves but are seen above them. This selection tolerates heat to cold, rain to drought, and wind. An added bonus, similar to other nasturtiums, are the edible leaves and flowers (great in salads). Baby Rose would be a good choice for small spaces and containers.

Wave Carmine Velour petunia is the newest color in the popular Wave series. The bright velvety carmine rose flowers are two inches or more wide and cover the plants through the season. Similar to many newer petunias, spent flowers don't need removing ("deadheading"), as old ones just fade and drop and are covered by new flowers. Similar to other Wave petunias this one spreads, only getting about six to eight inches tall, but spreading to three feet wide or more. This makes it good in masses, as a groundcover, interplanted among taller plants, or in hanging baskets and raised containers where it can spill over the sides. If in landscape beds, space plants about two feet apart. As with other petunias, site this one in full to part sun. Wave petunias are so popular that they have their own website for care tips, combinations, and design ideas (www.wave-rave.com).

You can find more All-America Selections winners, information on them, and sources, from their website (all-americaselections.org). If you're unsure what to grow in your garden this season, or want to try some new crops or varieties, these are a good place to start. Many won't be available as plants locally, so plan to order seeds and enjoy sowing and growing them yourself.

The Impatiens Is Back!

By Larry Hodgson

In 2013, a fast-spreading disease—impatiens powdery mildew or IMP (*Plasmopara obducens*)—essentially wiped the garden impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*, which for over 40 years was the world's most popular annual), off the horticultural map, leaving gardeners struggling to find replacements. What other annual could bloom so wonderfully in the shade?

Then, just last May, I wrote about the news that a disease-resistant strain of garden impatiens had been developed by PanAmerican Seed and was scheduled for release in 2020 or 2021.

Well, flash forward to winter 2019 and a competing company, Syngenta, has beaten them to the punch. The new variety, Imara® XDR, is already here. In fact, you can buy seeds or plants from several mail-order sources right now! Undoubtedly certain garden centres will also be selling plants of Imara impatiens this summer.

How It Was Done

No wizardry or genetic manipulation was necessary to develop Imara impatiens. Mathijs Vermeulen, Head Grower at Syngenta Flowers, explained that over 5,000 seedlings were evaluated to find a first resistant plant. Even when inoculated with the disease or grown literally next to infected impatiens plants, the plant kept blooming massively right through the summer, while other plants wilted and died within 1 ½ to 2 weeks. Several years of crossing, backcrossing and testing were then carried out until Syngenta felt it had a strain of disease resistant impatiens that was ready for the market.

Growers were able to test drive the plant last year and are thrilled with the results. Now home gardeners will be able to get their hands on the plants as well.

What to Expect

If you decided to grow Imara impatiens this summer, here's what to expect:

- Good disease resistance
- Nice range of colors
- Excellent garden performance
- Easy to grow
- Adapted to both sun and shade
- Dense mounded plant about 12 inches (30 cm) in height and spread
- Looks and grows just like the garden impatiens you knew and loved.

Start seed of garden impatiens indoors about 10 weeks before the last frost date in your area. In many areas, that will be between mid-February and mid-March. If you buy plants, don't plant them out until all danger of frost has passed and the air and soil have warmed up.

Varieties for 2019

This year, you'll be able to choose between 6 colors and a mix: Imara XDR Orange, Imara XDR Orange Star, Imara XDR Red, Imara XDR rose, Imara XDR Violet, Imara XDR White, plus Imara XDR Mix. I've only been seeing the mix in seed catalogues, so you may have to go to your local garden centre this spring if you want one of the separate colors. Or ask them to reserve plants for you now.

And in the Future?

Syngenta is not the only company working on bringing back the garden impatiens. Expect other companies to jump into the fray over the coming years with their own selections. Will we eventually see literally hundreds of varieties of garden impatiens in all sizes, shapes and colors

like before? Very probably! The garden impatiens is definitely back: enjoy!

Mail Order

Here are some of the mail-order sources for Imara impatiens seed:

- Stokes Seeds
- William Dam Seeds

Vermicomposting

The missing link in composting household scraps!

William Pellerin
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton

To the uninitiated, vermicomposting often appears to be one of those practices best left to the quirky and the eccentric. While it may be of passing interest to many gardeners, the idea of disposing of kitchen waste in a household worm bin may be unappealing to many. This author recommends taking another look at this wonderful practice, in order to reap its numerous benefits.

Many gardeners will have found that backyard composting is a relatively inefficient way of transforming kitchen waste into compost. This is because one of the fundamental pillars of composting is achieving the right balance between carbon and nitrogen. Kitchen waste is "green" waste, high in nitrogen, rather than "brown" waste, high in carbon, and backyard aerobic composting works far better with brown waste. This is why fall leaves, pine needles and paper decompose better than kitchen leftovers, and it is often why gardeners end up turning over their compost bins months after depositing kitchen scraps, only to find completely undecomposed banana peels.

Rather than giving up on producing one's own compost, the solution is to find better more efficient method for disposing of kitchen scraps. Enter worms. Worms break down organic matter when they eat, and leave behind castings that are an exceptional fertilizer.

Adding worm castings to plants and crops comes with enormous benefits. Gardeners and vegetable growers have long been aware of the beneficial impacts of worm castings on their plants, and the scientific literature is rapidly catching up. For example, Ohio State University has developed a comprehensive research program on vermicomposting which include experiments investigating the effects of vermicompost's on the germination, growth, flowering, and fruiting of vegetable plants such as bell peppers and tomatoes (as well as on a wide range of flowering plants including petunias, marigolds, bachelor's button, chrysanthemums, impatiens, sunflowers, and poinsettias). A consistent finding is that commercial horticultural potting mediums are enhanced significantly upon incorporation of vermicompost food wastes. Other studies have shown that vegetable crop response to vermicompost exceeds crop response to conventional rates of synthetic fertilizers. Plants were larger, the soil was richer and well inoculated with microbial biodiversity, and growth rates and crop yields could increase by as much as 50 percent following proper application of vermicompost!

Garden beds amended with vermicompost have better soil aeration, texture and lower soil compaction. They have improved water retention capacity, better root growth, nutrient absorption, and nutrient composition, both on the macro- and micro-nutrients fronts. For example, vermicompost contains nutrients in forms that are readily taken up by the plants such as nitrates, exchangeable phosphorus, and soluble potassium, calcium, and magnesium. As vermicompost introduces beneficial microbes, it can enhance plant growth through the production of plant hormones and enzymes, and also control plant pathogens and nematodes, all of which can minimize crop yield losses.

Further since the negative effects of chemical fertilizers on soil are well known (i.e. alter the chemical properties, adversely affect microbial populations and can decrease overall soil productivity), it only makes sense to turn to nature's soil scientists, the earthworm!

So how might the average home gardener make use of this exceptional process?

The good news is that it can be easy. There are numerous ready-to-use worm bin "kits" for sale, and these provide an ideal entry point into the wonderful world of vermicomposting. Simply add worms and a bit of bedding (shredded newspapers, leaves, etc.) and your kitchen scraps will soon turn to black gold! Other gardeners may wish to build a worm bin out of materials they have around the house (such as Rubbermaid bins). This author can attest to numerous wonderful resources being available online and at the public library in order to help with getting started.

Those ready to embark on the vermicomposting journey will need to acquire red wiggler (*Eisenia foetida*) earthworms. These are a species of earthworm adapted to decaying organic material. Much smaller and quicker than the languid earthworms generally found in the garden, red wrigglers rapidly chow through kitchen scraps.

It may also be worth highlighting a few keys to success. Foods to avoid putting in the bin include meats, bones and onions, to avoid smells, and the addition of citrus scraps should be mini-

mized to avoid overly acidic soil levels. The addition of a bit of grit (sand or ground eggshells) will ensure the worms can use their gullets to work their magic. As worms breathe through their skin, and require moisture to do so, keeping the bin humid is a must.

This author keeps his worm bin in his basement year-round, and after four years has yet to experience any significant issues or downsides to the process (including smells, which don't arise when the worm bin is well cared for).

Aside from being an interesting conversation starter, there is almost nothing quite like pulling out a handful of worms to show the children of guests and hearing their laughter and squeals of joy. Perhaps the only thing that can match that joy is my own at observing the health of my garden vegetables a few weeks after vermicompost application!

District 2 Photography Competition

It's that time again! Time to start sending in your lovely photos for the annual OHA District 2 Photography Competition. Whether you are a beginner or more advanced photographer, all photos are welcome. So look through your photos from the last two years and see what you have. You might be surprised.

For the travelers out there, a bonus class has been added - Native plants from around the world.

Send in your photos to district2photos@gmail.com. The deadline is **March 31, 2019**. The photos will be shown in a presentation at the 2019 Spring AGM to be held in Pembroke on April 13th hosted by the Pembroke Horticultural Society.

Send in those photos!

CLASSES

Class 1: First Up – Early spring blooms – Location Canada

Class 2: Gardens on Display – Photos of garden beds public or private – Location Open

Class 3: Macro Close-up – Close-up of a red flower (whole or part) – Location Open

Class 4: Monarch's Favorite – Photos of the milkweed in any season – Location Canada

Class 5: Rainbow – Photos of a display of complimentary colours in a garden – Location Open

Class 6: Reflections in Water – Your interpretation – Location Canada

Class 7: Art in the Garden – Photos of bird houses, statues, benches or other decorative elements. Location Open

Class 8: Holiday Décor – Outside greenery display for the holidays – Location Open

BONUS CLASS:

Class 9: Native plants from around the world – Location Open

RULES:

1. Exhibitors must be a member in good standing of a Horticultural Society within District 2.
2. ***NEW:*** All photos submitted should be taken in the last two years.
3. Entries accepted in digital format only.
4. Please provide entries in .jpg format with a High Resolution (Photos should be at least 1MB or larger in size, otherwise they will not show well in the PowerPoint presentation)
5. Photos may be adjusted for lighting and colour balance or cropped but should not be enhanced by adding photo elements.
6. ***NEW:*** Two entries per exhibitor per class.
7. Take care to ensure photos are entered into the correct class so they do not get disqualified. Identification of entries as follows: RENAME your photos using the following format: **YourName_SocietyName_ClassNumber**
   eg: karenhaddon_KanataMarch_Class1
   For Society name, please use the full name, not just initials. See example above.
8. Please ATTACH your file to your email. Do not INSERT into the email message.

Please submit your entries to Karen Haddon **by March 31, 2019.** Photos can be sent by email as an attachment (one photo per email) to district2photos@gmail.com Subject line: D2 Photo Competition. Or they can be placed on a memory stick, CD or SD Card and mailed to Karen Haddon, 9 Dorey Court, Kanata, ON K2L 2V5. For return of your media (CD/DVD, memory stick or SD Card), please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Better yet, when you take that great photo, why not email it to the coordinator right away.

NOTES:

- Photos will be projected in a slideshow format presentation at the D2 AGM.
- Prizes will be awarded at the D2 AGM in 2019.
- Prizes for each class (if merited) 1st: $3.00, 2nd: $2.00, 3rd: $1.00.
  Best in Competition - $5.00.
- Judging Points Scale: Horticultural Value 40%, Photographic Value 40% and Appearance & Impact 20%.
  The Judge's decision is final.