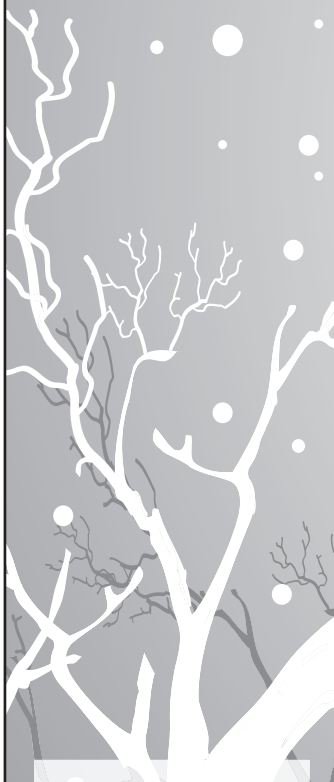


January 2016 Newsletter



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District
Horticultural
Society

P.O. Box 494
Perth, ON, K7H 3G1
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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association

*"Bare branches of each tree on this chilly January morn
look so cold, so forlorn.
Gray skies dip ever so low
left from yesterday's dusting of snow.
Yet in the heart of each tree
waiting for each who wait to see
new life as warm sun and breeze will blow,
like magic, unlock springs sap to flow,
buds, new leaves, then blooms will grow."*

- Nelda Hartmann, January Morn



From the President's Pen

Happy New Year, we welcome back all our members and a special greeting to new and avid gardeners. We are ready to start a very exciting year, our bicentennial which promises to be filled with events and special milestones.

We were certainly challenged last year in December when a great number of our perennials were popping their heads out thinking it was spring because of the above normal temperatures.

I felt I should push them back down before they were really fooled into thinking they should start growing. I am also not disappointed with a warm winter so far with the prospects of a much warmer than normal January, February and March.

Believe me, I won't be putting our traditional flag outside on our lawn which says "Let it snow", in case I jinx Mother Nature.

Our year is full and as always, I encourage as many of you as possible to participate in upcoming events such as Seedy Sunday, our plant sale, our social, the Flower and Edibles show in August and volunteer opportunities within Perth and District.

Take an opportunity to introduce yourself to fellow members and guests to briefly mention what interests you about our society and where your strengths lie, as we can all collectively share each other's talents.

Jane Law



Upcoming Meetings

The planned speaker for the **February 9th** meeting is Penny Stewart, presenting *"The Flowers*

of the Camino."

On March 8th, the subject of *"New Annuals and Perennials"* will be presented by Carol Onion of Hillside Gardens.



President: Jane Law • **Newsletter:** Irene Hofmann

2016 PDHS Executive

- Jane Law, *President*
- Madeline Archer, *Past President / Flower & Vegetable Show Schedule / Program*
- Barbara Smith, *Secretary / Treasurer*
- Carol Wilson, *Events*
- Carolle Anne Armour, *Director at Large*
- David Archer, *Plant Sale*
- Gerda van Wingerden, *Greeter / Share the Wealth*
- Janet Weiss, *Membership*
- Janette Wood, *Communications / Flower Show Steward*
- Karen Kristine, *Social Coordinator / Junior Gardeners Co-Coordinator*
- Lynda Haddon, *Community Gardens Coordinator*
- Richard Catchpaw, *Library*
- Robin McIntosh, *Communications / Junior Gardeners Co-Coordinator*

Sowing Greens And Other January Gardening Tips

*Leonard Perry, UVM Horticulturist
and Charlie Nardozzi, Garden Consultant*

Sowing edible greens and sprouts indoors, reading seed and plant catalogues, and growing peace lilies, are some of the gardening activities for this month.

If you have a set of grow lights or bright windowsill, you can grow mesclun or other quick-growing greens to add to early spring salads. Fill a tray with moistened seed-starting mix and sow seeds thickly, then cover with one-quarter inch of soil and mist the surface. Don't let the surface dry out. As soon as the first seeds germinate, keep the lights about 4 inches above the tray.

You can start your own sprouts for salads easily under even lower light, buying seeds for this at garden stores or online from catalogues. You can buy special sprouting trays that stack, or simply sprout seeds in a jar covered with cheesecloth. Moisten seeds overnight, then drain and place a layer in the container. Rinse and drain daily. Many seeds can be used such as beans and peas, mustard and other similar greens, grains such as wheat, grasses such as oats, lettuce, and even onions and their relatives.

Whether you use warm-white and cool-white fluorescent tubes or special plant lights to start seedlings, they lose light intensity after a few years and ideally should be replaced. If you feel it's hard to justify buying new lights that often, consider all the time and effort you're spending on starting plants. Without adequate light, your seedlings will grow spindly and will be less productive in the garden, and you won't get the most out of your efforts. Look for darkening at the ends of the tubes, a sign they are losing intensity. When replacing tubes, look for the lower wattage, energy efficient ones.

If you plan to order seeds from catalogues or online, or are considering this, there are some words to understand. If you're concerned about GMO's (genetically modified organisms), look for companies that have taken the "safe seed pledge" to not sell these. An example would be a corn variety which has had genes from the Bt bacterium inserted, in order to make it more pest resistant.

GMO's are not the same as hybrids, which are merely the result of crossing a couple parent varieties—similar to what nature does, only these being in a controlled manner. The abbreviation F1 or F2 denotes a first or second generation (crossed a couple times) hybrid.

Other abbreviations you may see in descriptions, particularly for some vegetables, refer to disease resistances. The catalogue will have a key to these. So, for instance with tomatoes, TMV refers to resistance to tobacco mosaic virus, N for resistance to nematodes, V for resistance to verticillium wilt, and so on.

If you want an easy-care houseplant which will tolerate fairly low light conditions or even daily artificial lighting, consider peace lilies (*Spathiphyllum*) if you aren't already growing one. These have long, strap-like leaves, and periodic white flowers. The flowers are elongate, half-cup shaped with a central white stalk. They don't like overly wet soils, but will take periodic drying out. This is a great indicator plant for watering—when it starts to droop, check your plants for watering needs.

Other activities for this month include checking stored summer bulbs and root crops, inspecting houseplants for pests, and visiting some botanic gardens—online.

(Charlie Nardozzi is a nationally known horticulturist, author, gardening consultant, and garden coach; gardeningwithcharlie.com).

Encouraging Wildlife in the Garden

By Helen Halpenny

Who can resist watching a robin tugging an earthworm from the garden after a summer rain, or an American goldfinch wrestling niger seed from a feeder or listening to the warble of a bluebird on a fence post? Inviting birds into our gardens can provide us so much pleasure. In return, for their songs and bug eating we surely will want to say thanks by providing them with their necessities- shelter, water, food and space.

Native plants are those that have grown wild for centuries and have adapted to local weather and soil conditions. These are the plants that wildlife depends on for long lasting food and shelter. Trees, shrubs, grasses, brush piles, tree hollows and nesting boxes are some of the many types of shelter that you can provide.

A feeding station is an obvious way to provide food in winter time. The rest of the year, plants that produce berries, nuts, and fruit can feed all sorts of wildlife. Hummingbirds like red blooms, particularly those with a tubular or trumpet shape. Columbine, cardinal flower, phlox, and geranium are a few examples.

Songbirds are drawn to fruit bearing shrubs like serviceberry, elderberry and crabapple. Bees and butterflies love asters, black-eyed-susans and goldenrod. If you want to have a hummingbird feeder, choose a red dispenser. Boil one part white sugar to four parts water for five minutes. Do not add red dye. All it does is introduce chemicals into the bird's diet. Cool and refrigerate the mixture. It will turn to alcohol if exposed to the sun. Fill one-third of the container and change the mixture twice a week. Make sure the feeder is washed with soap and water to remove bacteria.

Water for drinking and bathing is possibly the most important need and the one that sometimes gardeners forget most. Even the best birdbath has little appeal for birds if it is too far from shelter, birds need to hide from their predators. Birdbaths should be shallow, 2-3 inches, with flat rims and gently sloping sides. Birds must have secure footing before they will enter to bathe. A layer of flat rocks with tops above the water will give them a place to land. Birds like the sound of dripping water, so paradise to them is a birdbath beside a tree and below a dripping

bucket. Fill the birdbath with fresh water every day or two and scrub it out regularly with a stiff-bristled brush. Other sources of water might be the water that drips from your air conditioner or a backyard pool. A bucket of soggy sand will supply butterflies with their mineral salts. Bury the bucket, leaving a bit of the rim exposed. Soak the sand in water but don't let the water rise above the surface. Place a few rocks on top of the sand for perching.

There is nothing like a dust bath to clean the feathers and get rid of parasites. The creation of a circle of sand about 20 inches wide in a sunny corner will make an excellent dusting spot.

More diversity of plant material in our yards will encourage a wider variety of wildlife and a healthier environment for us all.

AAS Flower Winners For 2016

*Dr. Leonard Perry, Horticulture Professor
University of Vermont*

Each year the best of the new annual flowers are judged, and the winners given the All-America Selections (AAS) designation. In the past these have all been grown from seeds, but starting in 2015 those grown from cuttings have been included as well. This year's flower winners include two annual geraniums and a salvia.

To be an AAS winner, flowers must show improvements over any similar existing cultivars (cultivated varieties). If grown from seeds, as most are, they must bloom in the year sown. So a few perennials that bloom the first year from sowing have won as well.

In the past, the winners only were those that were deemed worthy across much of North America. While there are still these "national" winners, there are now regional winners as well—those performing particularly well in a particular region.

Salvia Summer Jewel Lavender is one of these regional winners for 2016 (Southeast, Heartland, Great Lakes), although the other three colours in this series have grown and bloomed quite well in the past in our Northeast region too. This Texas sage is a different species from the usual bedding out forms that most gardeners may know, having taller and thinner flower spikes reaching 18 to 24 inches high. Flowers are spaced a bit more up the stalks than with the compact

bedding scarlet sages.

Summer Jewel salvias bloom through the summer and are quite attractive to bees and hummingbirds. The other colours in this series all have been winners too — red (2011), pink (2012), and white (2015). All are easily grown from seeds sown indoors about 8 weeks before planting outside.

There are two annual geraniums in the Brocade series that are national flower winners for 2016 — Cherry Night with semi-double blooms of cherry pink, and Fire with semi-double orange blooms. Both reach 12 to 18 inches high, and should be spaced similarly apart. Brocade Cherry Night has attractive bronze leaves with green margins, while Brocade Fire has bicolor bright green leaves with dark centers. As with many other annual geraniums, it helps with these to promote more blooms by removing (“deadheading”) spent

flowers. These two geraniums can be purchased as plants grown from cuttings.

Each year, the last five years of winners are displayed in about 200 official All-America Selections gardens across North America. If traveling this summer, make sure to look up which gardens may be near your route (all-america-selections.org/display_gardens/index.cfm).

One of our top flowers over several years has been the AAS winning (2011) Glamour Red ornamental kale. It has very uniform, large bluish heads with pink centers that last well and darken through fall. Moon song Deep Orange marigold, another AAS winner (2010) has large orange flowers about 3-inches wide on plants about one foot or so high. We’ve had good luck interplanting this marigold with a contrasting color, such as purple alyssum or fan flower.



Horticultural Heritage:

Early Canadian seed catalogues from Robert Evans & Co. of Hamilton, Ontario.

