



# The Ladyslipper



Perth & District Horticultural Society

[www.perthhortsociety.com](http://www.perthhortsociety.com)

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P.O. Box 494  
Perth, ON K7H 3G1  
June 2022

## President's Pen

Here we are in the middle of June already. Gardens are flourishing with all of this rain and cooler temperatures.

This will be our last meeting until September, where we will have Cliff Byrnes, who will speak on Bringing House Plants Indoors.

Have a great summer and enjoy your gardens, family and friends. Take time to smell the roses along the way.

Linda

## White Gazpacho

Hands on 15 Minutes – Chill 2 hours

1 ¼ lb. cucumbers, peeled and chopped

1 cup seedless green grapes

1 slice country-style Italian bread, crusts removed and cubed (1/2 cup)

½ cup slivered almonds

¼ cup finely chopped shallot

½ tsp. kosher salt

1 cup plain Greek yogurt

1 Tbsp. sherry vinegar



Mint leaves and cucumber slices for topping

1. In a medium bowl combine first six ingredients. Cover and chill 2 hours.
2. Using an immersion blender, blend cucumber mixture until nearly smooth. Press through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl; discard solids. Whisk in yogurt and vinegar. Serve immediately or cover and chill up to 24 hours. Top with mint and cucumber just before serving.

Makes 5 servings (1/2 cup each).

Per serving: 184 cal, 11 g fat (4 g sat fat), 9 mg chol, 150 mg sodium, 16 g carb., 2 g fiber, 10 g sugars, 7 g protein.

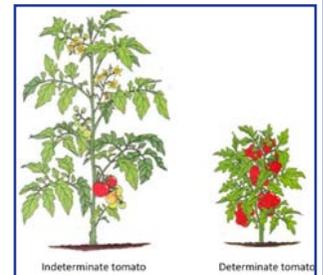
## Ask a Master Gardener?

Dale Odorizzi, Lanark County Master Gardeners

*Some of my tomato plants got so big and tangled last year that I had a hard time finding and harvesting the tomatoes. How do I fix this? Should I grow a different kind of tomato plant?*

A large tomato plant needs more than a light-weight tomato cage. Fruiting branches are heavy and will droop and sometimes even break without support. Buy (or make) something solid that will provide support for the branches and fruit, as well as the main stem. The main stem can be staked, or a fence or cage placed around the plant to support branches on its lateral bars. Just make sure to leave enough space in your supports to reach inside and harvest the tomatoes.

Make sure you pinch out the suckers (small leaves and stems) which grow at the point where the leaf joins the stem. Otherwise, they will turn into more branches. If the plant is getting too big and gangly, don't hesitate to shorten branches or even cut the top off the stem. You won't lose as many tomatoes as you might think as flowers that are starting in mid-late summer won't have time to ripen fruit before frost. Taking off those flowers allows the plant to put its energy into fruit already in progress.



Determinate types tend to be more limited in height and fruit set. The fruit will ripen in a short period, making it useful for tomato sauce making but not so beneficial if your goal is a long harvest. Indeterminate types will continue to grow taller and bear fruit over a long season. Some tomato plants these days have been bred as 'compact' or 'patio' varieties that remain small.

# Keep Your Lilac Young: Remove Its Oldest Branch Each Year

Source: The Laidback Gardener By Larry Hodgson, [laidbackgardener.wordpress.com](http://laidbackgardener.wordpress.com)

Selectively removing the oldest branch each year will help keep your lilac young and vigorous.

Lilac season is one of my favorite times of the year. The heady perfume of their flowers brings back memories of my great-aunt Sadie who grew two of them in the front yard of her old farmhouse. And they're so long-lived that, if the house is still standing, I'll bet the lilacs are too.

My father always pruned them for her after they finished blooming in late spring. No, he didn't deadhead (go over the whole plant selectively removing faded flowers). That seems to be a thing these days, but it takes forever. And really doesn't give anything to the old-fashioned common or French lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*), other than removing its seed capsules. And those are the same seed capsules that would otherwise feed beautiful evening grosbeaks in the winter. So, I really don't get it. Plus, deadheading lilacs leaves you open to injury as you struggle up a stepladder to reach those always-just-out-of-reach faded blooms.



## Daddy's Way

My dad never wasted time with deadheading. Instead, what he did was in fact a sort of maintenance pruning. Each year, he'd cut off one branch (two on a very vigorous specimen). Always the tallest one . . . and the oldest. And I've been doing the same thing.

The idea behind this annual rejuvenation pruning is to keep the shrub at a reasonable height while encouraging healthy younger shoots that will become the heaviest bloomers.

Most common lilacs will reach up to 20–23 ft (6–7 m) in height if left unpruned. That's 2 stories! And that puts their deliciously scented flowers well above your head. I mean, you can barely see them, let alone smell them.

Often the older branches, the ones you'll want to remove, are hollow. This is caused by an insect: the lilac borer. But removing one of the older, taller, out-of-reach branches that shades out the others gives renewed life to the entire shrub. It will respond to harsh pruning by sending up one or more new and vigorous branches. Do this every year to an overgrown lilac\* and within 5 years, it will be within an easy to reach 6 to 10 feet (1.8 to 3 m) tall with a denser, more floriferous habit. And it'll maintain that height as long as you keep the pruning up!

\*If a lilac is really seriously overgrown, you might indeed want to take out 2 branches a year for the first 3 or 4 years. Just to get things started.

## Take It All Off!

How far back do you need to prune these big branches? To the ground or as close as you can get to the ground. Say, 6 inches (15 cm), 1 foot (30 cm)? Something in that range. You'll need a saw. Maybe even a small chainsaw (lilac wood is hard). And while you're at it, you can remove suckers too. At any season. Most common lilacs produce far too many of them!

Ill.: [njaes.rutgers.edu](http://njaes.rutgers.edu)

Removing old branches also helps solve another problem: dealing with lilac borers (*Podosesia syringae*). They pierce holes in lilac bark and empty out the inner wood, leading to weakened branches that bloom less and can break off. However, they rarely attack branches less than 1 inch (2.5 cm) in diameter. So, by removing larger, older branches, you're also removing lilac borers . . . thus killing two birds with one stone!

Cut back the oldest branch to the ground or as close to ground as you can.



Do note that newly sprouted lilac branches won't reach blooming size for at least 3 years, and more likely 4. Even 5! So annual maintenance pruning will most affect seriously improve flowering in the medium and long term, not the short one.

### **When to Do Maintenance Pruning?**

Theoretically, the ideal time to cut back an old branch in order to stimulate regrowth would be in early spring, before the plant blooms. But . . . who wants to cut back a lilac in bud just about to flower? So, most gardeners compromise and instead prune right after the lilac blooms. That will still give the replacement branch time to grow and harden off so it will be ready to continue its growth in year two.

### **Laidback Lilac Rejuvenation in a Nutshell:**

- ▶ Once a year;
- ▶ With 3 weeks after flowers fade;
- ▶ Cut the tallest, oldest branch back to the ground;
- ▶ Remove any dead or damaged branches;
- ▶ Go back to your hammock and have a snooze.
- ▶ Pass On the Pruning Shears

And her mom, Marie, does love her lilacs. I planted them for her. She brings in huge bouquets annually and gives others to our less fortunate neighbors. Especially the gorgeous double 'Krasavitsa Moskvyy', with pink buds opening into ever-so-scented pale pink to white rose-shaped flowers. She adores it!



## **PDHS Community Garden Volunteers**

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Haddon

The Community Garden volunteers are in high gear seeing to the various Perth gardens we take care of: The Flag, Cenotaph, Museum and Inge Va gardens.

The flowers were finally ready 3rd of June to plant the Flag Garden and it took 11 hours for 5 of us from start to finish. Not actually the time frame, but how long each of us were on site. We are pretty proud of the final product. Many thanks to Dave Archer for arranging for the begonias and for planting the ageratum and alyssum each year himself. The Cenotaph we are going to have to take some extra time with this year as the soil has finally given out and the perennials need help and support. The Town staff will be assisting in tackling the issues with this garden in about 3 weeks time when they are available to assist. If you haven't seen the Museum gardens lately please take time to go and appreciate



the peace, beauty, colour, insects, birds and animals (we have rabbits!) The garden is coming into its own. Don't miss its many stages and colour shows. Inge Va is a Huge garden space and the loyal and dependable volunteers who come out regularly are making a dent in obtaining 'law and order' within the garden parameters. When we only garden there a total of 3 hours a month, this is no easy task, but once again, the time and energy is worth noting and acknowledging. I am working with the best band of dedicated folks I could ever wish for. If you have visited any of the gardens PDHS is involved with, please post and/or let us know what your impressions were. We would love your feedback.

# Home Brewed Compost Tea

Source: The National Gardening Association, Article By Charlie Nardozzi

Gardeners know that compost works wonders by nourishing soil and plants. Compost improves soil structure, helping it drain well, yet still hold adequate moisture for plants. It makes nutrients more available to plants; adds important microbes to the soil; and improves the workability of soil. But compost can be heavy and bulky to transport and spread. Compost tea offers the benefits of compost in a lighter-weight package. It's a liquid version of compost, making it easier to apply to plants and soil. Plus, nutrients are more readily available.



## Is it Extract or Tea?

The traditional method of making compost tea uses water to extract nutrients from the compost. The technique can be traced as far back as 4,000 years ago in ancient Egypt. It's very simple: Suspend a burlap sack filled with compost in a bucket or barrel of water and stir occasionally. The longer the compost is left to steep in the barrel or bucket or the more compost you use in relation to water, the more concentrated the liquid. This produces an extract of the compost.

Brewing compost tea is a more active process. By adding a food source, such as molasses, and adding more air to the mixture, you not only extract nutrients from the compost, but also grow a diverse population of beneficial soil microbes within 1 to 2 days. Adding the microbe-rich liquid to your soil boosts the number of 'good guys' and provides many benefits, such as increasing the uptake of nutrients and protecting plants from disease.

## Making Extract

To make a simple compost extract, add 1 gallon of finished compost to a 5-gallon bucket. Fill the bucket to within 6 inches of the rim with water and stir it occasionally. After 3 to 7 days, strain the liquid through cheesecloth into another

bucket, and use straight or diluted when to water your plants.

## Making Tea

Commercial compost tea brewing systems make this process easy by supplying all the compost, equipment, and instructions you'll need. However, you can brew your tea with components you purchase at a pet supply store or hobby shop. It all starts with good, healthy, finished compost. You can use your own compost if you make sure your pile heats up to 140°F to kill harmful pathogens and weed seeds, or you can purchase commercially made compost.



Here's how to make a home brewed compost tea: Add 1 gallon of compost to a 5-gallon bucket. Next, add air and food to the bucket.

Attach air tubes to an

aquarium pump and dangle it in the compost, keeping the pump outside the bucket.

Add 1 ounce of molasses to the compost, fill the bucket with water, and stir. Turn on the pump and let the mixture percolate for 1 to 2 days.

After brewing, strain the tea through cheesecloth, pouring the mixture into another bucket. For best results, use the tea soon after making it - aerobic microbes will die within 12 hours without the benefit of aeration and a food source.

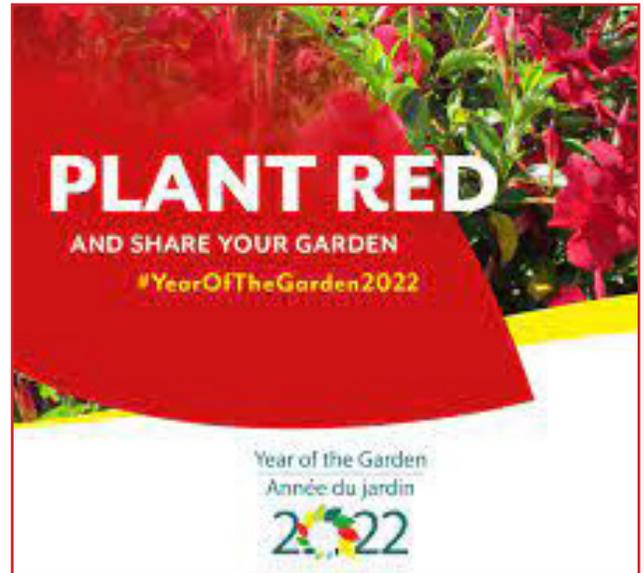
Whether you make compost extract or compost tea, it should smell sweet and earthy. If it has a foul smell, then it may contain harmful microbes, and you shouldn't use it on your plants. Even better, to be sure your brew is free from pathogens, have your compost tested at one of the national labs that offer this service.

## Using Compost Tea

You can use a watering can or a garden sprayer to apply compost tea. If you're using a sprayer, filter the tea a second time through a cloth

mesh or cheesecloth-like bag to strain out any pieces of organic matter.

Clean out your hand-held pump sprayer and fill with an appropriate mixture of tea. The rates of application will vary depending on your gardening situation. On poor soil it should be used straight, while on fertile soil it should be diluted - one part tea to 10 parts water. Apply it every two weeks.



## How Should I go about Growing My Own Micro Greens?

Growing micro greens is an easy win for gardeners. Don't assume they are only grown by specialists to be enjoyed by patrons of top-end restaurants. Micro greens are simply young seedlings of many well-known salad and vegetable crops which we've all grown but probably eaten at a more mature dare I say, less trendy stage.



In terms of life cycle, micro greens sit neatly between equally trendy sprouted seeds & baby leaves. These seedlings make great sandwich fillings and are more environmentally sound than for example, bagged salad from supermarkets.



To grow micro greens, simply fill a seed tray or shallow pot with peat-free compost to top. Use your hand to gently firm the compost and then water well to settle the level a centimetre or so below the

top of the container. Sparingly sow the seeds across the surface; avoid over-sowing in dense patches which could lead to young seedlings

damping off (i.e. catching a fungal disease, which they can be prone to do).

Lightly cover the seed with sprinkling of compost and place a piece of glass over the tray or place the tray/pot inside a clear plastic bag to increase the humidity around the germinating seed. Remove this as soon as the seeds start to show a flush of green on the surface of the compost.

Don't allow the compost to dry out while the seeds are germinating. I find that the gentlest way to water is to sit the seed tray or pot in a tray of shallow water and allow the compost to soak it up; this keeps the seed leaves dry which helps prevent fungal fatalities.

You should start to see results within 7-14 days once the second set of leaves emerges, you can harvest your micro greens with a pair of scissors. Sowing every couple of weeks will ensure a regular supply of micro greens throughout the summer.



Try any of these crops for flavoursome leaves: radish, chard, spinach, coriander, beetroot, broccoli, cabbage, chives, mustard and peas.

## Strawberry, Rhubarb and Red Pepper Smoothies

1 cup unsweetened almond or oat milk

1/3 cup quick-cooking rolled oats

2 cups strawberries, stemmed, quartered and frozen

2 cups fresh or frozen rhubarb, thinly sliced, or frozen sliced rhubarb

1/2 cup red bell pepper, chopped

3 Tbsp. Almond butter

4 Medjool dates, pitted and chopped

1/4 tsp. pink peppercorns

1/4 tsp. vanilla

In a blender add almond milk and oats; let stand 10 to 15 minutes. Add remaining ingredients to blender; cover and blend until smooth.

Makes 2 servings (12/3 cups each)

Per serving: 423 calories, 12 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 0 mg chol., 11 g fibre, 50 g sugars, 7 g protein.



## Garden Promenade

National Capital Region

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Peony gardens at the Central Experimental Farm

