

March 2017 Newsletter

"March is a month of considerable frustration - it is so near spring and yet across a great deal of the country the weather is still so violent and changeable that outdoor activity in our yards seems light years away."

- Thalassa Cruso



Upcoming Meetings

April 11, 2017: Zero to Low Maintenance Perennials. Speaker: Laurie Bachand, Stoneridge Gardens and Nursery.

May 19, 2017: Conifers in Your Gardens. Speaker: Suzanne Patry, Whitehouse Nursery and Display Gardens

PDHS Proposed Pollinator Project

Pollinators have been at risk for a few years now and to help celebrate Canada's 150th Anniversary, Perth & District Horticultural Society (PDHS) volunteers will, at the request of the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Horticultural Association and the Town of Perth, be taking on the cleaning up and planting of flowering perennials in the Wendy Laut Memorial Ribbon of Life Garden in Last Duel Park. For those who knew Wendy Laut and/or were a part of creating the original Ribbon of Life Garden in her honour, you may wish to join us as we tackle putting some new life into the garden and at the same time, assisting and supporting our ailing pollinators.

We will be working in TWO gardening sessions and if you

are interested, you can assist in different ways: Come out and join us as we care for the garden, plant new perennials and/or split existing ones; or if you can spare some cuttings from your own perennial garden, we would gratefully accept your donations, or you can do both! We have not set any gardening dates yet but if you are interested in helping out or want more information, please call Lynda Haddon at 613-267-6754.

When Is The Best Time To Repot Your Houseplants?

By Larry Hodgson

Many authors insist you should repot your houseplants in the spring (late February through April) and that is indeed an excellent period for doing the job, but you don't need to limit yourself to those 3 months. In fact, you can repot a houseplant whenever it is in "active growth" (putting out new leaves, roots, stems or flowers).

Just about the only time when it's best to leave your plants alone is when they are dormant or more or less dormant, usually in late fall and winter. You see, when you repot a plant that isn't growing, it just isn't ready to handle the sudden influx of



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District
Horticultural
Society

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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association



President: Robin McIntosh • **Newsletter:** Irene Hofmann

fresh moist soil and added minerals and that can lead to root rot.

So, for many plants, consider repotting from late February through late October in the Northern Hemisphere, but not in November, December, January or early February.

That said, there is an exception. Plants that grow all year long can be repotted in any season. You'll find that many plants growing under artificial lights will grow all year and you can therefore repot them whenever you feel like it!

D2 AGM

April 22, 2017 – Eganville

The Eganville & District Horticultural Society is hosting the D2 AGM on Saturday, April 22, 2017 at the Opeongo High School, 1990 Cobden Rd. (between Eganville & Cobden) Douglas, ON, K0J 1S0. Registration is \$20.00 per person. The closing date for registration is April 8, 2017.

Orchidophillia

April 22 and 23

The Ottawa Orchid Society is pleased to announce that its 36th annual show will be held on April 22 and 23, 2017 at the RA Centre, 2451 Riverside Drive in Ottawa. Orchids are a preferred subject for many photographers. Tripods are welcome on Sunday morning of the show, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Show hours are 12-5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday 9-5 p.m. Admission is \$12 for adults; seniors and children over 12 are \$10.

More information on the show and extra discount coupons can be found on our website at www.ottawaorchidsociety.com.

Shutterbugs - Snap To It

2017 District 2 Photography Competition

The District 2 competition will take place at the 2017 District 2 Annual General Meeting on April 22, 2017 in Eganville.

Entries will be accepted in digital format or print format. They can be mailed to Linda Bartlett, 1060 Ford Road, Perth, Ontario K7H 3C3. Digital photos will also be accepted by email as attachments (one photo per email) to district2photos@gmail.com – Subject line: D2 Photo Competition.

Please submit your entries to Linda Bartlett by **March 31, 2017**.

For classes, rules, entry deadlines and further information, visit the OHA District 2 website: www.gardenontario.org/site.php/district2

2017 OHA Photography Competition

Host: District 5, Richmond Hill, Ontario,
July 21-23, 2017

Theme: *"Green From Shore to Shore"*

Entries must be mailed to the Photography Chairperson and postmarked no later than May 1st, 2017. Please include your email address (if you have one) for better and faster communication.

CHAIR: Dianne Westlake, 1189 Greencrest Drive, Peterborough, ON K9J 8K9.
Phone: 705-742-9167, dianne.westlake@gmail.com

For classes, rules and regulations, visit the OHA website: www.gardenontario.org/sho/pho.php

PDHS Flower Show for April

Section I: Horticultural Specimen

- Class 1* African Violet – any colour – single flower
- Class 2* Best potted plant in bloom – other than violet – named if possible
- Class 3* Best potted foliage plant – named if possible
- Class 4* Spring bulb – other than Narcissus – 1 stem

Section II: Design

- Class 5* Spring At Last – a design with visible use of water
- Class 6* Pik'n Plunk – an arrangement celebrating spring

Birds Do It. Bees Do It. What Do Carrots Do?

Judith Cox

Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton

Growing your own food is exciting and fascinating. Waiting for the seed catalogue to arrive and spending long winter evenings making garden decisions is a perfect way to pass the time. We wait with patience and expectation as the seeds we ordered sprout

under lights. Spending fresh spring days pacing up and down the aisles of your favourite garden nursery is another way to heighten the anticipation of summer's vegetable bounty.

But where do these seeds come from? Yes, you can buy packages of them everywhere but how are they made? That is where we enter into the fascinating world of plant reproduction.

Let's take carrots. It is a cool spring morning when one plants carrot seeds. With sun and rain the little seeds grow and hopefully avoid baby earwigs and carrot maggots. As spring turns to summer the baby carrots have lovely green lacey tops and little carrots forming underneath. In the autumn as the cooler weather returns they are pulled from the ground and taste delicious. Usually the story ends there but where are the seeds!!

In this garden, heritage carrots have been planted each spring for many years and one row is always set aside and not harvested. This is done with beets and onions as well for they are all biennials. Carrots as with other biennials form their roots the first year and their flowers the second. As we are in a cold climate we can choose to leave the carrots in the ground protected by straw or keep them in damp sand over winter to replant in the spring. This process can be made even more difficult if the carrots are hybrids. Best to stick with heirloom varieties if you want to encourage carrot seeds.

As the plant reaches maturity, umbel flowers have formed on the carrots. The blooms are similar to Queen Anne's lace and are soon visited by bees and other pollinators. In order to encourage pollinators, have a water source nearby and other sheltering plants. Harvest the seed when it turns brown by gently shaking the flowers into a paper bag. The seed must be kept dry in order to be viable.

While these biennial vegetables have a long and drawn out journey to produce seed and need help with the pollination process there are many vegetables that are quite independent. These self-pollinators include lettuce, tomatoes and legumes. Be aware that while they do not need insects for pollination, cross pollination can occur if insects are on these plants. It is best to keep different varieties of the same vegetable at a good distance from each other - at least 6 m/20 feet.

And then there is the potato. Potatoes do form seeds but the gardener will have much

more success from growing these plants from a tuber or seed potato. Potatoes grown from a tuber are classified as clones. If you want to encourage your potato to produce seed, it is best to start with a heritage variety. Flowers will form but often dry up before pollination. If fruit forms from these flowers it will look like a little tomato. Do not eat it as it is known to cause stomach distress. Pick the fruit as it gets soft, mash it and leave it in water for about three days. The seed that sinks to the bottom is viable and should be dried and kept in a cool dark place.

Many interesting things go on in your vegetable garden. There is never a dull moment. The circle of life begins with the smallest of seeds and finishes with a magnificent harvest. Our vegetable gardens are so alive with insects, toads and many different pollinators. Enjoy the bounty!

Banana Peels For Roses: A Slippery Subject

By The Laidback Gardener

As far back as I can remember, the tip has been circulating that you can "feed" your roses by placing or burying banana peels at their base.

According to this tip, banana skins are rich in potassium and therefore, as they decompose, they'll stimulate the rose bush to grow and bloom better. And guess what? That is true... but only just barely.

Yes, banana peel contains potassium: about 78 mg/g. And it also contains other minerals – calcium (19 mg/g), sodium (24 mg/g), manganese (76 mg/g) and iron (0, 6 mg/g) – that roses also need to grow well. In fact, not just roses, but any plant. So there is no reason to reserve your banana peels strictly for rose bushes rather than to share them with anything else you may be growing. That's the first bit of misinformation.

The second is that there is something extra special about banana peels as fertilizer, but in fact almost all table scraps and garden waste also contain potassium plus often something roses will appreciate even more: nitrogen and phosphorus. So logically it would also be interesting for your rose bushes if you placed wilted lettuce, potato skins, weed leaves or xx (insert here the waste product of your choice!)

at their base... but then your rose garden would start to look more like a garbage heap than a flower garden.

If you decide to do so start dumping kitchen scraps or garden waste around your rose bushes, it would be wise to either bury the waste or to cover it with mulch. When waste is composted directly in the garden, it's called pit composting if you dig a hole or trench and bury it or sheet composting if you spread it around and cover it with mulch.

Rather than drop banana peels at the base of roses, I suggest you instead put them in your compost bin along with all the other materials you recycle and then that you share the compost thus produced with all your plants. Compost produced by a composting a variety of products will be more balanced than banana peels alone and therefore more beneficial for plants, including roses.

If your composter is not accessible in the winter, just freeze your banana peels in the meantime. Yes, in the freezer or outdoors (many people simply leave in a container for that purpose near the back door during freezing weather). Interestingly, banana peels decompose more rapidly after they've been frozen and thawed out than if you apply them fresh.

Sowing Herbs And Other March Gardening Tips

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

Sowing herbs indoors, growing shamrock plants, and planning crop rotations for this year's vegetables are some of the gardening activities for this month.

Probably the biggest gardening project for March is to start transplants. Cabbage, broccoli, and other cole crops that can be set out early in the spring, as well as slow-growing flower varieties like verbena, pansies, and petunias, can all be started this month. But wait until April to sow seeds for tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and most flower varieties that cannot be transplanted until the danger of frost has past.

To get a jump on the herb gardening season, start seeds of basil, parsley, sage, and thyme indoors. Start seeds in flats filled with moistened seed-starting mix. Once the seeds germinate, place the plants under grow lights for 14 hours a

day (timers make this easy) and keep soil moist.

Check the seed packet to determine if the seeds can be started indoors or should be sown directly in the ground when the weather warms up. Starting seeds indoors not only gives you a jump on the growing season, often leading to earlier harvests, but also allows you to have many varieties you can't find at greenhouses and garden stores.

Keep in mind that seed catalogs and packets often give "days to germination" which is the time for seeds to sprout, not the time until they are ready to plant outside.

As you begin planning and planting your vegetable garden beds, remember to rotate crops: Avoid planting crops in the same family in the same spot more than once every three years. Tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant are in the same family; so are squash, cucumbers, and pumpkins. Many pests and diseases overwinter in the soil, so moving plants around can disrupt their life cycles and minimize your need for pest and disease controls.

The familiar St. Patrick's Day shamrock plant is available at florist shops and many grocery stores this time of year. It has tiny, dark green, triangular leaves and grows to a height of about six inches. Shamrocks like cool air, moist soil (except in their dormant period), and bright light. Ideal temperatures are between 50 and 65 degrees (F), and over 75 degrees may cause plants to become dormant. Soils should not be kept too wet or waterlogged.

When the temperature climbs to 50 degrees in early spring and the wind is low, move houseplants with scale or mealybugs outdoors to a shady spot and thoroughly coat the foliage with lightweight or summer oil. Then move the plants back inside. A forceful stream of water, repeated every week as needed, may be all that is needed to dislodge mealybugs. Check areas where leaves join stems for the white fluffy masses of the mealybugs. Check undersides of leaves for brown scales, or their smaller light-colored crawling stage.

Take a walk around your yard to check for perennials that may have heaved out of the ground, exposing their roots to drying winds. Gently tamp them back into the soil or, if the soil is too frozen, surround them with mulch as protection, tamping them down later.

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