



The Ladyslipper

Perth & District Horticultural Society

www.perthhortsociety.com



Est. 1984

P.O. Box 494
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March 2022

President's Pen

Welcome to our first in-person meeting since March 2020. For now the platform will be very short, just some society business and then our speaker. We will not have the social part of the meeting with food or drink served at the in-person meetings for now, but hopefully we can get back to that in the next few months.

Since we are meeting in person again and printing the newsletters, we are going back to our standard four page layout. We will keep them interesting and fun to read.

Our speaker for the April 12th meeting will be Brian Carson and the topic will be "Treasures of the Ottawa Valley." An award-winning photographer and neurotic plant hunter, recently honored by the OHA, Brian will lead us around the valley with lots of horticultural tips and humorous anecdotes. Come journey with him for awhile as he unveils some of the recent floral gems found hiding in plain sight here in the valley ... not far from your backdoor.

We are planning 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.

We will have a few flower shows this year and will have the schedules available next month.

Looking forward to spring!

Linda

Shamrocks for St. Patrick's Day

By Becki Rizzuti for Dengarde, condensed and edited by Jane Avery

Growing Shamrocks isn't all its cracked up to be

Shamrocks, sometimes also referred to as "clover", aren't always easy to grow in the home. A quick scan of Amazon's product reviews for shamrock seeds will show that many people become frustrated when their seeds won't grow the way they expect them to, even when they follow the instructions on the packaging. Note: To grow from seed, clover takes two weeks to two months to germinate and sprout, depending on time of year and climate. Clover can also be grown from bulb. We recommend store bought developed plants for 2022 as St. Patrick's Day is just around the corner: March 17.



Caring for Your Clover Plant Indoors

Care is relatively simple. You want to do what you can to imitate the climate in Ireland, where this particular clover is most common. This means you'll want to start by providing them a spot to grow in where the temperature is warm (but not hot!) and where they receive indirect sunlight. Too bright and you'll kill your shamrocks!

Shamrock Watering Care

Don't over-water your shamrocks! They want to be moist, not wet. Misting should do the trick but check to make sure that the soil is consistently damp. This will simulate the rain that they would get in the wilds of Ireland.

Pots Full of Pansies

By Barbara Martin for The National Gardening Association



In early spring, and again in fall, I pot up bright cheerful pansies and violas in containers of all kinds. The potting soil in containers is warm enough for the plants to thrive, and it adds a bright spot in the spring landscape. You can plant these beauties in almost anything that holds a smidgen of soil, and they look great. I usually plant mixed violas in an old-fashioned metal laundry tub by my kitchen door. The mass of flowers makes the old utilitarian tub look almost respectable and the waist-high container brings the flowers up where I can really enjoy them.

Microclimate Effects. These cool-season bloomers thrive on my sheltered, south-facing patio, where the microclimate offers protection against cold nights and raw wind. But when temperatures start to rise, this area becomes almost Mediterranean in climate, baking in reflected heat from the brick and rock. Then the cool-season flowers-pansies, violas, primroses, trailing lobelia, and sweet alyssum-will collapse in protest, and I'll refresh the tub with heat loving verbena and nicotiana.

A Cooler Exposure. This year, I've decided to be smart and plant the violas in portable containers (12" or less in diameter) so I can lift and move them off the hot patio when they begin to suffer. Then I'll put them on the east side of the house, where the morning sun provides just enough light and the afternoon shade keeps them cool. In that kinder, gentler location, they may even survive until fall (as long as I remember to water them!). As cool temperatures return in the fall, the violas will begin blooming again, and I can move them back to the patio for a fall color show or replant more pansies.

Best Portable Pots. As I searched for containers, I was reminded how pansies lend themselves to a romantic Victorian look, while the simpler violas are versatile and brighten up any setting. By mixing colors or following a monochrome scheme, you can arrange them to suit almost any style or taste. My smaller, portable containers also make excellent "Happy Spring" gifts, but that's only if I can bear to part with them.



Ask the Master Gardener

Dear Master Gardener: An orchid I've had for several years is blooming and looks healthy but seems to have a number of things (roots?) growing out of the top. I've also noticed that the plastic pot inside the ceramic one is cracked, and there are more roots there. Should I be doing something, and if so, what? I have no experience with orchids.

MG replies:

Your orchid is very likely a Phalaenopsis, which are the easiest orchids to grow as house plants. In the wild, they grow clinging to a tree rather than in the ground, which is why we usually plant them in a loose bark-chip medium. The roots are adapted to absorbing moisture from the air, so it's not a problem if some of them are outside the pot. Your plant seems to be happy and growing well, but the root mass is outgrowing the space available, so the plant would probably like some fresh medium and a new, slightly larger, pot (you will have to replace the inner pot and may also need a larger outer pot as a result). It is not necessary to tuck all the roots into the soil when repotting but do trim off any that are dried up or mushy. Repotting is best done after the plant finishes blooming. Here are some links to sites that go over the repotting process in more detail.



<https://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/smartgardener/how-to-repot-an-orchid>

<https://www.bhg.com/gardening/houseplants/care/how-do-i-repot-my-orchid/>

Best Spring Gardening Tips

By Sean Barker for Laidback Gardener

Spring is a busy time in the garden. The fallow period of winter gives way to an explosion of life and color, as first the snowdrops appear, then the daffodils and soon the bluebells. While early spring flowers represent new life, they also signal to the gardener that it is time to clear away the winter debris and start clearing out and organizing.

Here we explore some of the best tips for making the most of your garden this spring.

The Spring Inspection and General Tidy Up

The first job in any garden in spring is to inspect its condition and to do the general tidying needed to remove the debris of winter. Your beds and borders need special attention, removing leaves and other detritus. Your tidy up should also include cutting back old dead growth of deciduous grasses and herbaceous perennials. Put materials into your composter, except the weeds. If you try to compost weeds with maturing seeds, you will be creating problems for yourself later as you spread their seeds throughout your compost.

Be sure that the temperature is consistently above 50 °F (10 °C) before removing these materials. Removing it before this time may prematurely halt the hibernation of insects and other small beneficial garden inhabitants.

Clearing the borders so you are back to bare soil prepares the way for the digging and turning required and the application of compost or recycled green waste.

Address Any Hardscaping First

There will be a period of early spring when the ground is liable to freeze and cannot be worked. Therefore, you can spend these earlier months attending to the hardscaping tasks you have planned.

During your inspection, you might have noted damage to retaining walls; your stepping-stones might be uneven, your fences might need some maintenance and more. While plants are still dormant and overwintering wildlife is hibernating, this is the best area in which to spend your time.

You can also use this time to put up a trellis and drive in stakes, especially if the ground is wet

rather than frozen. Installing a peony ring will be easiest to do now, too, as it is tough work when the leaves have unfurled.

Prune Woody Shrubs

For some kinds of woody shrubs and trees, spring is the best time to get your pruners out. Research carefully which varieties enjoy a spring trim before starting. The general rule is that any flowering shrub that blooms on new wood, or this year's growth, is suitable for pruning in spring. Spring is not the time to prune early flowering shrubs that bloom from old wood, such as azalea, lilac, ninebark and forsythia.

You can get started by pruning away anything that has been broken or damaged during winter. You are looking for ice damage, as well as any cracks or splits caused by the wind. You should remove all dead wood too at this time.

Spring is also a good time to shear back your evergreen borders.

Divide Perennials and Transplant Bulbs

Early spring will be marked by perennials and shrubs beginning to pop up. Now is the time to divide and transplant any that have outgrown their space or are too large for the design of your garden and need control. If you have been closely monitoring your perennials, you will want to divide them in the opposite season to when they bloom, which avoids disrupting their bloom cycle.

Move evergreen shrubs before their new growth appears to give them time to re-establish their roots. Deciduous shrubs are more forgiving and can be moved anytime they are not in bloom.

Sow Your Seeds

You might want to start sowing your seeds indoors in trays. Geraniums, begonias, snapdragons, peppers and eggplants (aubergines) all have a long growing season, so these should be sowed in February or March in most climates.

Remove Hibernating Pests

Before the temperature rises, go around your garden hunting the pests that will cause you so many problems later in spring and summer. Look

at the crowns of perennial plants and look for slugs, snails, and aphid colonies that are overwintering.

If you have summer bedding pots, check for vine weevil larvae, small white grubs that live in the soil and feed on plant roots.

Install Water Barrels

Spring is a wet season, and nature knows new life needs a drink, so it provides plentiful rainfall. It is a great time to collect rainwater for the summer months. Using a water barrel will reduce the need for water companies to resort to groundwater reserves and rivers in the summer, which is harmful to the local ecosystem. While harvesting rainwater is essential for helping the environment, it is also better for your garden. Many plants do much better watered from your barrel than with tap water, often slightly alkaline.

Position your barrel under a downpipe on your home or shed. Most newly built homes have a closed drainpipe and you will need a diverter kit to siphon off the water into your barrel.

Plant Your Summer Bulbs

Spring is not only the time for clearing out; it is also a time for planning. It is not too late to browse for new varieties to plant, and you can enjoy some catalogue browsing with your early morning coffee. Yet, you have probably bought some bulbs in early winter in preparation for this time, especially lilies, dahlias and gladioli. When soil warms and dries up a bit is the time to prepare it and plant your bulbs.

When planting your bulbs, be sure to match the variety to the soil type. The soil for nearly all bulbs needs to be well drained, as a bulb will rot in waterlogged soil. Remember to plant the bulb with the point facing up and, where there is no point, new sprouts usually indicate which side should be on the top.

A Busy Time

Spring is the season for heavy lifting in the garden. The work you do now will bear fruit in the summer months, and gardens always deliver on the effort committed to them.

About Laidback Gardener

Garden writer and blogger, author of more than 60 gardening books, the laidback gardener, Larry Hodgson, lives and gardens in Quebec City, Canada.

Plant Sunflowers for Ukrainian Freedom

By Larry Hodgson, for Laidback Gardener

The sunflower has often been used to symbolize peace, and sunflowers are the national flower of Ukraine. You can show your sympathy and support for the struggling Ukrainian people by planting sunflowers as encouragement.

I'm not a very political person, other than that I always vote for the Green Party. But, like many people, I'm sick over the invasion of Ukraine by Russia or, more specifically, Vladimir Putin's army. (We all know many Russian citizens are horrified by this invasion!) So, in sympathy and in support of the Ukrainian people, I'll be planting sunflowers in my garden this summer.

Ukraine is the world's major supplier of sunflower oil, so expect problems getting your hands on that too this summer! It also features in the colors of their national flag: sunflower yellow and sky blue. They use their national flower everywhere: in fields and gardens, in flower arrangements and garlands, and cooking. This summer, given the circumstances, they may not be able to grow any.

Across the world, sunflowers are being painted on protest posters and pinned onto clothes to show sympathy for the Ukrainian people. Even the American first lady Jill Biden has been spotted wearing a mask embroidered with a sunflower. One Ukrainian woman is claimed to have shoved a handful of sunflower seeds into the hands of armed Russian soldiers, telling them to carry them in their pockets. That way, when their bodies fall to the ground, sunflowers will grow. Heavy!

Most gardeners sow their sunflowers directly in the garden, where they want them to bloom. I think gardeners should climb on board and sow sunflowers this summer. It's so easy to do: just dig a shallow hole $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ in (6 to 12 mm) deep in a sunny spot, drop in a few seeds, cover and water once. Dig, drop, done! The plants will be up and blooming in no time. Plus, sunflower seeds are inexpensive and widely available. And yes, you can grow them on a balcony too: you just need a big pot. So, no excuses!

You can learn more about sunflowers and growing them in the article *Year of the Sunflower*: <https://laidbackgardener.blog/2022/03/05/plant-sunflowers-for-ukrainian-freedom/>