



The Ladyslipper

Perth & District Horticultural Society

www.perthhortsociety.com



Est. 1984

P.O. Box 494
Perth, ON K7H 3G1
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President's Pen

Welcome to daylight savings time and the promise of spring,

We are so impressed with our new board members Muriel Hopper and Caroline Bolduc. They are full of fresh ideas and are super enthusiastic. The dynamic duo recently represented PDHS at Seedy Sunday at the Civitan. We are pleased to report that the two signed up 15 members – 11 new and 4 renewals. Please welcome our new recruits.

Lynda Haddon, our community garden coordinator has been honoured by the Heritage Perth Advisory Panel for her tireless dedication to maintaining the Flag Garden, Museum Garden, Inge-va House and the Cenotaph. Community Services Director Shannon Baillon agreed Haddon is “unbelievably dedicated to the gardens around town” leading a team of volunteers.

Are you interested in partnering with Lynda, to be inspired by her love of gardening? We are looking for a volunteer to join forces with Lynda to lead the charge on maintaining our pride of Perth gardens.

We are thrilled to be meeting in person again. Are you interested in adding back into our meetings the social component? In the past we enjoyed a recess during

our meetings to indulge in a snack, refreshment and community.

Please let us know your thoughts so we can move forward at our next meeting.

Thanks,

Linda and Jane

PDHS April Meeting

April 11, 2023

Happy, Healthy, Hostas

Speaker: Ann Frederking

Ann will talk about why she thinks hostas are addictive and a bit about their origin, care, propagation, potential problems, companion plants, and where to get them.

HAPPY, HEALTHY HOSTAS



by Ann Frederking © 2020

Is it Spring Yet?

Excerpt from Laid Back Gardener

You were hoping that winter was over, weren't you? After a long break in winter temperatures and the melting of a good half of the snow cover, most seemed convinced that winter was over. In fact, I had snowdrops in full bloom in a protected bed last week. But even the flowers were surprised when the snow returned. But, as a gardener, how should you react?

First of All, Don't Panic

I once heard a story about a woman who spent a night sitting next to her tulips with a hair dryer to keep them warm because she was afraid of one last winter spasm. But perhaps she now knows that this was an unnecessary precaution.

Indeed, the nature of the "early-waking" plants makes them able to support the jerks of our climate. Bulbs that come out of the ground early (daffodils, crocuses, tulips, etc.) will simply stop growing, but temporarily, waiting patiently for warmer weather to return.

Even my snowdrops in full bloom will not be affected. I have every confidence that they will be fine under the snow and when it melts, they will continue to bloom.



A Good Thing

In fact, the return of cooler temperatures and snow is a good thing for plants. A total snow melt in early March could have been disastrous

for many plants, especially fruit trees which, unlike bulbs, can be seriously damaged by frost once they start to bloom. Moreover, maple syrup producers are very happy with the turn of events: a spring that is too early and especially too hot is not good for maples either.

We mustn't forget that, if snow is cold for us, it's quite different for plants. Snow is like insulation: it protects plants from very low air temperatures.

Indeed, under a carpet of snow, the temperature rarely drops below 20°F (-5°C). If there is no more snow and the temperature reaches, say, -10°F (-23 °C), then the plants will face truly winter conditions. Ideally, the snow should melt slowly and not disappear completely until mid-April, when the risk of really cold temperatures is over.



The Best Thing to Do Is... Nothing at All!

When winter suddenly returns, the best thing to do is... do nothing. Let nature take its course: it knows what it is doing. Don't try to clear the plants of snow, you risk damaging them. And, even though I've said it many times before, I'll say it again: shoveling snow off the lawn is not good for your lawn. The best lawns are the ones that stay under the snow the longest!

Watch Out for Your Conifers

The only recommended action is for conifers and trees with branch tips caught in icy snow. When the snow melts, it often does so from underneath, dragging the branches still trapped

in the ice downward and possibly breaking them.



But don't try to shovel them out: you'll do more damage than the ice! Simply walk on the snow around the branches to break the crust that has formed. This will free them from the weight of the snow and allow them to gradually regain their position when the snow finally melts.

For the gardener, snow is not an enemy, but a friend.



Junior Gardener's Program for 2023

This year, we're excited to be re-introducing our Junior Gardening Program to the following area schools: Drummond Central, Queen Elizabeth, Stewart, St. John, and North Elmsley. Volunteering with this program is an opportunity to work with a team to introduce Grade 3 students to some essential steps to a life-long love of plants and gardening. Here's a summary of how the program will be presented this year:

Start on Thurs., April 27 and run once a week for 4 weeks this year ending Thurs., May 18.

Week 1, the students will sow tomato and marigold seeds in a strawberry container.

Week 2, the students will be shown to how to grow their own potato plant and as well as being introduced to plants that grow from bulbs, etc.

Week 3, the students will create their own small planter for their parent(s).

Week 4, the students will review what they have learned over the previous weeks. They will learn how to transplant their tomato and marigold plants and choose a library plant for their own to keep.

If you would like to volunteer or help in any way, please contact one of our co-coordinators:

Robin McIntosh (613) 253-5690 or
Sandi Sissons (613) 267-8977.

Hummingbirds Love the Nectar from Turtlehead

By Judith Adam Source: Garden Making Magazine

Hummingbirds love the nectar found on turtlehead flowers.

I have a small patch of pink turtlehead (*Chelone obliqua*, Zone 4), sometimes called twisted shell flower, a perennial that blooms in late summer through early fall. They send up 30-inch (75-cm) spikes of hooded pink-purple blooms, similar to the violet-blue helmet flowers of 'Bressingham Spire' monkshood (*Aconitum carmichaelii*, Zone 3). The monkshood begins blooming a little earlier, but then are concurrently in flower with the turtleheads through early fall, and they're good plant partners. One year, I had the continued presence of three hummingbirds in my city garden, and the turtleheads were one of their favourite breakfast and dinner stops. The hummers were so eager to get at the turtlehead nectar that sometimes it looked as if the flowers had been electrified and were jiggling around like marionettes.



I was curious to know why the hummers were aggressively fighting each other for turtlehead nectar. My turtleheads make showy flowers and I presumed they had been hybridized, but, in fact, my clump of *C. obliqua* is a species, and produces superior nectar. The hooded flowers look a bit like a turtle's mouth (well, sort of) and provide a receptacle to collect and preserve fresh nectar, providing the perfect access for the long beak and delicate tongue of a hummingbird.

There are some turtlehead cultivars, such as *C. lyonii* 'Hot Lips', which has shiny green leaves and rosy pink flowers. Another is *C. glabra* 'Black Ace', a tall, dark-leaved cultivar with 40-inch (1-m) stems and white flowers, hardy to Zone 6. Another species, *C. glabra* (syn. *C. obliqua* var. *alba*), has white flowers and is hardy to Zone 4.

Turtleheads can be found in the partial shade of woodlands, naturalized along streams and growing in organic soils with lots of moisture. They like consistent moisture, and will slowly spread by underground rhizomes when their water requirements are met. Mine are in typical garden soil that's sometimes dry and, consequently, the clump doesn't increase. (I suspect it would also have more flower spikes with regular irrigation.) Now that I know turtlehead produces the rich nectar my hummers prefer over the sugar water in the red hanging feeder, I'll add more..

It's interesting to see the clear preference hummers have for natural nectar over sugar water. Floral nectar consists of sugars (approximately 55 per cent sucrose, 24 per cent glucose, 21 per cent fructose), combined with trace components of minerals, proteins and amino acids that build in complexity. In scientific terms, nectar is the reward pollinators get for moving pollen from one plant to another. In bird terms, hummingbirds relish natural flower nectar as the best meal in the garden. This has shown me the wisdom of growing more species plants that will manufacture the enriched diet hummers prefer. The process of plant hybridization often retards nectar production, and I want to increase the stock of nectar-rich species plants I'm growing. I may have to pass up some pots of beautiful cultivars, but it's a small price to pay for a summer of hummingbird antics.