

# May 2017 Newsletter

*I think that no matter how old or infirm I may become, I will always plant a large garden in the spring. Who can resist the feelings of hope and joy that one gets from participating in nature's rebirth?"*

*- Edward Giobbi*



## Upcoming

**May 20, 2017: ANNUAL PLANT SALE**, 8:30 - 10:00am  
Stewart School, Sunset Blvd,  
Perth

**June 13, 2017: Q & A Master Gardeners, Summer Social**

**September 12, 2017: Creating a Pollinator's Paradise.** Speaker: Sarah Coulber, Canadian Wildlife Federation

## Annual Plant Sale

The PDHS plant sale is a long running event held on the Saturday morning of the May holiday weekend (May 20, 2017 - 8:30 am to 10:00 am) in the gymnasium at Stewart School on Sunset Blvd.

The primary purpose of the sale is to raise funds for the running of the Society.

When dividing your plants this spring, pot up a few for the plant sale, we can't have a sale without plants!

## Looking For Wire Tomato Supports

If you have finished with any of your wire tomato cages and would like to get rid of them, would you consider donating them for use in the Museum gardens? We have several peonies which would benefit from your support.....

Thank you in advance,

Lynda Haddon

## Growing

## Beautiful Dahlias

*By Helen Halpenny*

Dahlias, those diverse brightly coloured blooms grown from tubers, are making a huge comeback in the plant world. There are varieties barely 12 inches tall and others that tower to seven feet. The blossom colours range from white to yellow, orange, red, pink to purple and all sorts of combinations. The foliage, too, may be green, bronze or almost chocolate brown. Some dahlias have blooms the size of dinner plates and some are round as baseballs. Well grown plants will reward the grower with blooms from mid-summer until frost.

Full sun and a soil that is well-draining and rich is necessary. Some dahlias can be grown from seed. Most can be grown from cuttings. Most often we grow new plants from tubers that we have stored in a frost free area over winter. Chunks of stored tubers are planted in spring when the soil temperature is above 55 degrees. The tubers which must contain an 'eye' are planted in a hole about 6" deep. Taller growing plants will need to be staked and this is easiest to do at planting time. Low bushy varieties will benefit from pinching out the growing tips of the stems when they are about 18" tall to make the plant



Lanark Orchid

Renals

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Horticultural  
Society

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District #2 of the  
Ontario Horticultural  
Association



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

grow stout and floriferous. A continuous supply of water is a must.

Dahlias will reward you with continuous colour in the garden and they are also prized as cut flowers. It is best to cut dahlias when in full bloom. When picked, prick a hole using a straight pin into the neck of the stem to prevent air blockage. Place stems in three or four inches of hot water, let water cool for a couple of hours before arranging them in a vase. The blooms should last for a week. To get larger blooms disbud the side buds on a stem leaving just one bud. This will receive all the nutrients and result in a larger blossom.

After a killing frost has blackened the foliage in fall, cut the stalks to about four inches and dig the tuber. The original tuber you planted in the spring will have grown into a cluster of tubers. Let the bunch dry for a day or so and then store in peat moss, or dry leaves in a box or bag in a cool basement over winter. The medium should be barely damp. If the tubers are too moist they will rot, too dry and they will shrivel and die. In spring, your tubers can be divided by carefully cutting apart the cluster making sure that every section includes at least one 'eye'. These are buds from which new growth will sprout. They look like little pink points. Expect to have five or more plants for every one started the previous spring.

Dahlia fanciers, namely the American Dahlia Society have named each form of flower. These include: anemone, ball, cactus, semi-cactus, incurved cactus, collarette, formal decorative, informal decorative, lacinated, orchid flowering, peony, pompon, single and waterlily. All gardeners can enjoy growing these easy, and rewarding flowers. The hardest decision is which kind and colour to choose.

## PDHS Flower Show for June

### Section I: Horticultural Specimen

- Class 1** Any peony – 1 stem
- Class 2** A collection of peonies – at least 3
- Class 3** Bearded Iris – 1 spike
- Class 4** Siberian Iris – 1 spike
- Class 5** Any rose – 1 stem or spray
- Class 6** Hosta – one cultivar – 3 leaves
- Class 7** Any other perennial – named – 3 stems
- Class 8** Collection of herbs – minimum 3 – named

### Section II: Design

- Class 9** Canada 150 – a design using red and white flowers
- Class 10** Round and Round – a design incorporating spheres
- Class 11** Pik'n Plunk – an arrangement celebrating Canada

## Can I Eat My Dandelions?

### Edible Weeds In The Garden

*Amanda Carrigan, Master Gardener  
of Ottawa Carleton*

One of the tasks gardeners face regularly is weeding the garden. All sorts of uninvited things turn up that have to be removed before they start choking out the plants you do want there. So where do the weeds go? Into the compost pile or the green bin, probably. Have you ever brought them into the kitchen instead? A surprising number of the weeds that grow in gardens or lawns here are edible, and many are both tasty and nutritious as well. It's certainly worth trying a few this summer, since you need to pull them out anyway! Maybe they won't all be to your taste, but maybe you'll discover a new favorite. I can't say I've tried all the possibilities listed here (partly because a lot of them are eaten as cooked greens, which are not a favorite of mine), but the ones I have sampled have ranged from all right to rather good. And if you want to take it a step farther, I can recommend Euell Gibbons' classic book, *Stalking The Wild Asparagus*, and Elias and Dykeman's *Field Guide to North American Edible Wild Plants*, as good resources to start with. As well, a quick search on line will turn up recipes for whatever weed you want to try eating!

**LAMB'S QUARTERS**, *Chenopodium album* - The tender young tips and leaves are good as salad or cooked greens. Most often compared to spinach, without a strong flavor. Cook the greens by boiling in a little water until tender, about 5 minutes. Serve with butter, salt and pepper. Or, if you prefer, many recipes for cooked greens seem to use a sauce of ¼ cup vinegar, ditto chopped onion, 4 slices crumbled cooked bacon, and salt and pepper to taste, all simmered together. The seeds (if you accidentally let them go to seed) can be ground and mixed with regular flour to make 'buckwheat' muffins or pancakes. Lamb's quarters is rich in vitamins A and C, and calcium.

**PURSLANE**, *Portulaca oleracea* - The young leaves have a rather lemony flavor, and can be

used raw in salads or cooked for 10 minutes. The succulent texture is not for everyone (to me they're a bit slimy), but apparently the texture is less noticeable if you use the cooked stems in a casserole. The thick stems later in the season can be pickled like cucumbers and the seeds can be ground for flour like lamb's quarters. It is worth knowing that the seeds can keep ripening on the plant after it's pulled up – so if you want the seeds, pull the plants a little early when they are mature, then spread them to dry on a sheet or something for a couple weeks, to make sure the seeds are there and not back in the garden. Purslane is a decent source of calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C

**DANDELION**, *Taraxacum officinale* - Apparently the dandelion's scientific name translates into 'the official remedy for disorders'. It may not be a cure-all, but this well-known weed is a good source of calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C. And every part of the plant can be eaten – think of that the next time you're digging them out of the lawn! The young tender leaves (before you see flower buds) are good in salad or as cooked greens. In fact, specific strains of dandelion for greens have been bred for production. If you dig up the whole plant early in the season, the crowns and immature buds can also be cooked as a vegetable, also requiring only about 5 mins cooking. The spring roots may be pared and sliced, then boiled about 20 minutes, changing the water once, and with a pinch of baking soda in the first water. The roots also may be roasted and ground as a coffee substitute, scrubbed and roasted thoroughly in a low oven. The flowers may be used for fritters, or serve to make dandelion wine.

**STINGING NETTLE**, *Urtica dioica* - Another superlatively useful plant, once you get past the stinging part. (Once they're dried, wilted, or cooked, the sting is no longer an issue). Nettle is a classic tea/spring tonic plant, since it is high in vitamins A and C, proteins, and minerals. Harvest the tender younger leaves and shoots to dry for tea or cook as a potherb. The cooked greens are very good in a cream soup, as well. As a cooked green, the hairs on the leaves give a texture that may not be liked by all, but pureeing the cooked greens or using only the cooking liquid in soup can solve that. Besides eating them, nettles will give a fibre similar to flax/linen, can be used to dye wool in grey/tan/khaki tones, and are supposed to be useful as a compost accelerant. Note: Don't use the older leaves/plants for cooking or

tea. They have what I heard coyly called 'effects on the urinary tract' which translates to having blood in your urine.

**GARLIC MUSTARD**, *Allaria officinalis* - I decided this was not something I wanted to eat in large quantities, but if you want a few leaves to add flavor in a salad or a cooked dish, it would be a nice choice. Garlic mustard has exactly the flavor you'd guess from the name, although it's subtle, almost an aftertaste. Harvest the young leaves, blossoms, and seeds pods in spring or early summer, and add raw to salads or steam/boil until tender.

**SHEEP SORREL**, *Rumex acetosella* - If you have this in the garden or lawn, you've probably cursed it for being hard to remove, as it is one of those annoying things that regrow if you leave roots or runners in the soil. But the leaves have a lemony-sour taste, and can be added to blander greens in a salad, cooked as a potherb (change the water twice in the cooking process), used to flavor a soup broth, or made into a beverage: boil 1 cup loosely packed leaves in 1 quart water for 2-3 minutes, cover and steep 15 minutes, strain, sweeten to taste, and serve hot or cold.

**COMMON DAYLILY**, *Hemerocallis fulva* - Not exactly a weed, but it does spread fast enough to need controlling in the garden, and a good edible plant. The buds, picked a day or so before they open, can be used in stir-fries, or boiled a few minutes and used as a vegetable. The texture is a bit like asparagus. The buds and wilted flowers from the day before can be dried for later use, and added to soups and stews. The firm young tubers can be eaten raw (described as sweet and nutty) or boiled for about 15 minutes and seasoned.

**JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE**, *Helianthus tuberosus* - Also known as sunchokes, another semi-weedy plant that often needs controlling in a garden setting. To get rid of them, you need to dig the tubers up. And happily, the tubers are edible, and gaining popularity as a gourmet vegetable. Dig them up in fall after frost, peel or scrub them, and then you can essentially treat them as another root vegetable – boil and mash, roast, or slice and fry them. The tubers have more iron and calcium than potatoes, although less vitamins, and are low in starch.

**MORE WEEDS TO TRY** - That's about all the weeds I have personally sampled – but there are a lot more that are edible. Try the tender young greens of chickweed, violets, plantain, lady's thumb, cheeses, amaranth, galinsoga, or cleavers.



Young leaves of peppergrass, shepherd's purse, or mustards have a more peppery flavor, as do their seeds. Burdock, goat's beard, and evening primrose have edible roots. Violet flowers, amaranth seeds, and milkweed shoots, pods, and flowers (properly prepared) are other possibilities. You might end up looking at the weeds in your garden as a good thing.

## Perth Museum Notes

### *Bird Watching Tour:*

In support of the Perth Museum Grounds, a Bird Watching Tour on May 27, 2017 at 7:30 - 10 a.m. will be held. It will be located at the Perth Wildlife Reserve, 100 Wildlife Rd. off Rideau Ferry Road. The cost is \$20.00/person, parking included. Tickets are available in advance at the Perth Museum Visitors' Centre, 613-267-1947.

### *50th Anniversary Reunion*

The Perth Museum is having a volunteer reunion to commemorate 50 years at the Matheson House on Sunday, May 28 from 2-4 pm. Visitors, volunteers & staff - past and present - are welcome for music, refreshments and to reminisce. For more information call 613-267-1947.



### **GARDENING:**

The art of killing weeds and bugs to grow flowers and crops for animals and birds to eat.

## Planting Vegetables And Other May Gardening Tips

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

Planting vegetables, proper mulching, and being on the lookout for ticks are some of the gardening activities for this month.

It's vegetable planting time in most of the area. In valleys and warm areas plant tomatoes, peppers, beans, lettuce, squash, and cucumbers the end of the month. Many like to plant on the long weekend. In colder areas you may want to wait until early June to plant these heat lovers as well as watermelon, okra, and eggplant. Plant them too early before the air and ground warms up, and they won't grow, and may even rot.

Flowers are a bit more forgiving than warm-season vegetables if planted out early and the spring is cool. Just have some frost protection

ready, just in case. A heavier weight "frost blanket" provides a couple degrees more frost protection than a lighter weight fabric. Young seedlings just sprouting such as lettuce, beets, and carrots need a consistent supply of water now so they don't dry out and die. Once germination starts, it can't be stopped, so if the weather turns warm and dry, water these seeded beds every day.

Tomatoes produce and grow best when staked or caged to keep the plants off the ground. Place these supports when you put transplants into the ground so you don't disturb the root systems by installing them later. Caged plants can grow freely, but use large cages made from heavy gauge wire to support them. If using tomato cages or wide wire mesh such as from fencing, make sure to hold it up with one or two stakes so the heavy plants won't topple later.

When gardening, especially around weeds and grassy areas and as plants grow taller, be on the lookout for ticks. Three types of ticks, but particularly deer ticks, can transmit the serious Lyme disease. Although rarely fatal, it can be quite debilitating unless treated early. Tick bites that don't disappear in a few days, that develop a "bull's eye" appearance, and expand, should be checked out at once by a doctor.

While no vaccines prevent this disease, it can be treated with antibiotics during early stages of infection. Wear long pants and sleeves if ticks are about, and check yourself after coming back indoors.

Make sure if you have rabbits and deer and groundhogs that your plants are safe. If you plant in a discrete area, you can fence it with 2-foot high chicken wire for low mammals. Just make sure the wire mesh is either partially buried or anchored to the ground. If rabbits are hungry or persistent, they may chew through chicken wire. For these, you'll need to install heavier gauge rabbit fencing.

For deer you'll need taller fencing, perhaps 4 feet for a small area but up to 8 feet for large areas. The lower height often works if you have a small bed, as they're afraid of jumping in and getting trapped. There are some very unobtrusive black mesh netting products that you'll hardly notice. Of course there are many repellents that you can buy or make and spray onto plants.