

May 2018 Newsletter



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District Horticultural Society

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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association

May and June. Soft syllables, gentle names for the two best months in the garden year: cool, misty mornings gently burned away with a warming spring sun, followed by breezy afternoons and chilly nights. The discussion of philosophy is over; it's time for work to begin.

- Peter Loewer



Upcoming:

May 26: ANNUAL PLANT SALE
8:30 - 10:00 am, Stewart School,
Sunset Blvd.

**June 12: Master Gardeners Q & A
Summer Social**

Plant Sale

Date: Saturday May 26
9:00 – 10:30 am
The Stewart School Gym

The date has changed from our usual Victoria Day Weekend. Everything else remains the same. We will need help to set up and receive, price and position plants on Friday 25th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Help to unite willing gardeners with suitable plants on Saturday 26th from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m..

More than this we need your plants. When dividing perennials please pot up any excess for our plant sale. Surplus annuals, shrubs and trees can also be sold.

Accurate labeling is important too. Plant name, sun or shade, mature size, blooming period and flower colour all help our customers make the right decision. Please put the label on a stick so that the customer can read it as the pots will be on the floor.

If you have any questions call David archer at 613-283-1032.

Lime to Control Moss: Another Garden Myth

*By Larry Hodgson,
The Laidback Gardener*

There is nothing worse than a gardening myth that refuses to die, especially when it causes gardeners to waste their money. And this is the case with the stubborn belief that you can eliminate moss from a lawn or garden simply by applying lime. Unfortunately, even garden centers repeat this false information, with the result that their customers are misled. No, lime will not kill moss: applying it to do so is just throwing your money out the window!

This myth derives from the belief that moss only grows in acid soil and therefore, if there is moss in your lawn or garden, the soil must be acidic. But in fact, mosses are highly adaptable plants that will grow in acid, neutral and even alkaline soils. What the presence of moss really does tell you is that the soil is of poor quality, period. When other plants grow poorly, moss, being highly adaptable, moves in, occupying the empty space. The moss itself is not the problem, it is a symptom of poor



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

growing conditions.

When you see moss in your lawn, your flowerbed or vegetable garden, five factors may be involved:

- Deep shade;
- Poor soil (lacking in minerals);
- Soggy soil;
- Densely compacted soil;
- Highly acidic soil (pH less than 5.5).

In fact, it is usually a combination of these factors that so hampers the growth of other plants that moss is able to move in. Maybe the soil is compacted and shaded, or poor, soggy and acidic. Some of these factors are easy enough to judge for yourself. You can easily see whether the location is shady and if the soil squelches when you walk on it, you can be sure the soil is soggy. Try to push a pencil into it: if that is hard or impossible to do, you can be pretty sure it is too compact.

There really is no easy way, however, to spot acid soil or mineral-poor soil at a glance. For that, you need to do a soil test. Especially, never apply lime before making sure that the soil really is suffering from excessive acidity. Lime is toxic to plants if misused!

The only real secret to controlling moss is make sure the conditions are better for other plants. Aerate the soil if it is too compact (you can mix in lots of organic matter), drain it if it is soggy (perhaps by adding a raised bed), enrich it with compost or organic fertilizer if it is poor, thin out overhanging branches if it is too shaded and of course don't hesitate to add lime if the soil test does indicate that the soil is very acid. Once that is done, other plants will be able to prosper and they will slowly, over time, take over and chase the moss out (moss won't tolerate competition).

Mulch will initially cover and kill moss... but if you didn't improve the soil first, it will eventually grow back on top of the mulch. This isn't going quickly enough for you? After making necessary changes, simply mulch the soil of your flowerbeds or vegetable garden. Mulch will cover the moss and cut off its source of light... and without light, it will die.

You can't mulch a lawn like you can a flowerbed, since mulch will cut off the light to the grass and kill it too. Instead, try the following:

First, fix the growing conditions. If not,

all your efforts will be in vain. Now, spray the area with one of the various anti-moss products (prefer an organic soap such as EcoSense Moss B Gone, widely available in garden centers) to kill the moss initially. Then rake it off and sow the area with grass seed. Try to use grass seed adapted to your conditions (there are mixes for partial shade, for example, if shade is part of the problem). If you don't, the grass seed won't take hold and, if there is nothing else there to take its place, the moss will return.

Personally, I think this is the real question to ask. What is so wrong in having moss in your landscape? Unless you live in a rainforest where the extreme and constant humidity can allow moss to grow up and over lower-growing plants, smothering them, moss usually hugs the ground and is not harmful to other plants. Instead it is "filling in the blanks", growing where other plants won't. In fact, moss is even beneficial. It is essentially a living, self-maintaining mulch, growing naturally as an understory in forested areas, creating a moss layer that moderates abrupt temperature changes to the roots below, helps to keep the soil from drying out too deeply, contributes to enriching the soil and reduces weed growth. It can even form a beautiful green carpet quite as beautiful as any grass lawn. And moss between paving stones? How beautiful is that!

Of course, when the moss grows on man-made structures (roofs, wall shingles, etc.), you do need to control it as it reduces their useful life, but in a garden or in a lawn... why not learn to appreciate its beauty and its benefits rather than seek to eliminate it?

Too often human beings think they know better than Mother Nature... but in my opinion, she is almost always right!

Garden Tour

The Friends of the Rideau Lakes Public Library are hosting a **Summer Garden Tour** on Tuesday July 17, 2018. The following gardens are on the tour:

- The Maitland Garden of Hope
- Von Berlo Gardens
- Rideau Woodland Ramble

Your ticket includes transportation in an air-conditioned bus departing from five locations: Carleton Place, Perth, Smiths Falls, Portland and Elgin. Please



bring a picnic lunch which you can enjoy in the Van Berlo Gardens on the banks of the St. Lawrence. Tickets are \$45, on sale until July 1. (A minimum of 45 participants are required to make this tour viable. If cancelled you will receive a full refund). For further information contact

lookformadeline@gmail.com 613-283-1032

Money raised is in support of the summer literacy program offered by the Rideau Lakes Public Library.

June Flower Show

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 Standing Tall – a line design
- Class 10 Kaleidoscope – a design inspired by colour
- Class 11 Looking Small – a miniature design
- Class 12 Pik'n Plunk – a centrepiece using peonies

Recycling Coffee Grounds And Other May Gardening Tips

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

Recycling coffee wastes, waiting to move spring-flowering bulbs, and getting rid of tent caterpillars in fruit trees are some of the gardening activities for this month.

Coffee grounds contain some major nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) as well as some micronutrients, so put them to work in your garden. Allow them to dry and then

spread them around the base of plants. Lettuce, especially, seems to benefit, and the grounds may benefit acid-loving plants since the grounds are slightly acidic. Coffee grounds also will deter slugs. Slit coffee filters and place them around the base of hosta stems, or scatter the coffee grounds, if slugs are a problem.

If you want to move some spring-blooming bulbs to another spot, or thin thick clumps of daffodils, wait until the foliage has turned yellow later in summer, then carefully dig them up and let them dry in a shady spot for a few days. Store the bulbs in a cool, dry place for the summer until it's time to plant them in fall.

If you haven't planted containers yet, consider adding a water absorbing product (sold as this in garden stores) to the soil first. You only need a small amount (follow label directions), with the result being that you'll need to water less often as plants grow. This kind of addition is especially useful in hanging baskets that tend to dry out quickly, especially those lined with coir (coconut husk fiber), and in pots made of fiber or clay.

Check apple, cherry, and other fruit trees for nests of tent caterpillars. Blast low-lying nests with water to destroy them, or knock them to the ground and destroy them. A spray of BtK (make sure to get the "K" version) will kill emerging caterpillars but, being a natural bacterium, is not toxic to beneficial insects, birds, or humans.

Hummingbirds arrive back in our area usually in late April in southern locations, early May in the north. After their incredibly long journey northward, they're ready for food. Hang a hummingbird feeder or two this time of the year, and either use hummingbird food you can buy (a powder to mix with water), or make your own. To make your own food for "hummers", add two cups of sugar to a quart of water, heat to dissolve, then allow to cool before placing out. Don't use any other additives such as food coloring. Refrigerate what you don't use, and replace the feeder food every few days. If your feeder hangs from a pole, and ants find it, put Vaseline on a section of the pole to deter the ants.

Each year in the recent past, new annual flowers were displayed at the Burlington Waterfront Park and rated by Dr. Perry (pss.uvm.edu/ppp/aaswp.html), so you can find out which grow best in our North Country summers. Some of the top flowers in recent years included Toucan Red canna, Bandana Pink lantana, and Bicolor Pink

Stream alyssum. Several petunias rated highly: Supertunia Picasso in Purple, Vista Bubblegum and Vista Fuchsia. There were several excellent foliage annuals grown for their colorful leaves. Among these were Black Stockings fountain grass (this one can reach 7 feet high with roots that break pots), Sweet Caroline Bewitched Green with Envy sweet potato, Peter Wonder coleus, Royal Hawaiian Black Coral and Maui Gold elephant ears, and Quicksilver artemisia.

Among the many other gardening activities for this month are watching for ticks, pruning off lilac blooms when finished, and dividing perennials if they're overgrown.

Overdoers Anonymous

By Amanda Carrigan, Master Gardener

It's spring, and if you're a gardener, you probably can't wait to get outside. There's a lot to do in spring, and it's easy to get carried away. Just remember gardening is exercise! Treat it like other types of workout or sport, and take precautions to stay safe and healthy. After all, the aim is to be able to keep gardening for the foreseeable future, right?

- Take a few minutes to stretch, and warm up before doing any major tasks.
- Don't try to do too much the first day if you've been relatively sedentary all winter. Think of those middle-aged office workers who try to play pick-up hockey like they're professionals and end up in hospital.
- Drink water. Hydration is important.
- Invest in good tools. You will use less effort

and get a job done more efficiently if your tools are good quality and well-kept.

- Know the hazards. Keep your tetanus shot up to date. Know how to identify and respond to things like poison ivy and bees' nests. Use proper protective equipment and safety techniques for working with equipment and any chemicals, including gasoline.
- Protect your skin – cover up and wear sunscreen, even in the spring and fall. I have managed to sunburn my face in early April.

Reuse Juice Bottle Caps

Save the lids from any of your plastic juice bottles. Use four lids as feet for pots on your deck, patio or balcony. They are also good under any iron plant stands or patio furniture and will prevent them from staining wood or concrete surfaces.

*Tip from Garden Gate Magazine,
April 2018, Issue 140*

Fish Fertilizer?

Fish scraps are a good source of nitrogen for plants. They also provide phosphorus, calcium and other trace minerals. If you fish, the heads, guts and scales are great to add to the garden. To keep away critters, wrap them securely in newspaper and bury 18-24 inches deep. It will all break down within a few weeks.

*Adapted from Garden Gate Magazine,
December, 2017, Issue 138*

