

# September 2015 Newsletter

On every stem, on every leaf,... and at the root of everything that grew, was a professional specialist in the shape of grub, caterpillar, aphid, or other expert, whose business it was to devour that particular part.

~Oliver Wendell Holmes



## From the President's Pen

### Summer is coming to an end

We are surrounded by gardens popping with colour. I am excited with hibiscus blooms painting my garden with majestic presence. Fall mums are just starting to open and vegetables are at their peak. Summer is winding down but fall offers cooler weather with landscapes that sparkle with yellow, orange and red.

What does fall mean to you? For me it has new beginnings as activities start up for another season. Our days shorten and we start to prepare for a more structured day and evening. With only three meetings left this year, 2016 will be exciting as we prepare to celebrate the Bicentennial of Perth as

a Settlement. There will be exciting events through the town and one of the sanctioned events will be the Flower and Edibles show which will be sponsored by the Perth and District Horticultural Society on August 6, 2016 at the Perth Legion. Stay tuned for regular updates.

I would like to thank Pat Bertrim, Tineke Doornbosch, Dan Woods, Max and Janette Wood for opening up their gardens to Society members this summer.

In June we lost a very special lady, Velma Brown. A member of our Society, we shared a moment at our last meeting in June. Velma enriched my life with her friendship and we will all miss her.

*Jane Law*



### Upcoming Meetings

On October 13 the planned topic for the Hort society meeting is "Passion for Peonies" with Lana Taylor-Mills.

### Junior Gardeners:

A volunteer is needed to help organize the Junior Gardener Program for 2016 with Robin McIntosh, please contact her if



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Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District  
Horticultural  
Society

P.O. Box 494  
Perth, ON, K7H 3G1  
[www.gardenontario.org](http://www.gardenontario.org)

District #2 of the  
Ontario Horticultural  
Association

you are interested: [robinmccintosh435@gmail.com](mailto:robinmccintosh435@gmail.com) or call (613) 267-2421.

## Insects in Your Garden

October 3

St James Church

225 Edmund St., Carleton Place

*Brought to you by the Master Gardeners of  
Ottawa Carleton and Lanark County*

Join us for an all day session on Insects in your garden. We will cover:

- Insect ID for Gardeners by Dr. Hume Douglas
  - What's for Lunch—Insects in your Ornamental Garden by Mary Anne Jackson-Hughes
  - How Insects Look at your Garden by Dr. Henri Goulet
  - Wonderful World of Wasps by Joe Campbell
- The registration fee is \$30 before Sept. 20 and \$35 after. This includes speakers, lunch, treats at break and Silent Auction.

To register, visit our website [www.lanarkmkg.blogspot.com](http://www.lanarkmkg.blogspot.com), email [lanarkmkg@gmail.com](mailto:lanarkmkg@gmail.com) or phone Dale at 613-264-8135. Hope to see you there!

## Using Tomatoes And Other September Gardening Tips

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

Making the most of ripe tomatoes, preparing for frost, and planting shrubs are some of the gardening activities for this month.

Don't let excess tomatoes go to waste. Plum tomatoes and cherry and grape minis dry fairly easily in the oven. Slice them in half lengthwise, set them on parchment paper on a baking sheet, and drizzle with olive oil and sea salt. Roast them in a 250-degree oven until they are no longer juicy. When cool, pack them in freezer bags.

If you are fortunate to have way too many tomatoes to eat, harvest them all before they spoil or the frost gets them, and make sauce. This is done most easily with a food strainer. Cut the tomatoes into large chunks, put them in the top funnel, turn the crank, and sauce comes out one end and the skins out the other. You then can heat the sauce to thicken it, adding garlic,

onions, and herbs such as basil or oregano. Freeze it, and then you'll have an Italian sauce ready to go this fall for pasta dishes. Short on time now? Then just freeze the sauce, and cook with it later. Use containers made specially for freezing to ensure best quality and longevity.

With frost a distinct possibility this month, prepare to cover plants at the last minute. Make sure the cover extends all the way to the ground to hold in the heat, and try to prop it above the foliage so the leaves don't freeze. Old shower curtains and sheets are handy for this as are light fabrics sold for frost protection, available at complete garden stores.

The sales are on. There's still plenty of time to plant trees and shrubs. Root growth will continue into late fall or early winter, and plants won't have the heat of spring or summer to dry them out. Be sure to water well at planting time, and every week until they go dormant.

If you don't have a spot ready for your new shrub or tree additions, or don't get to them this fall, sink the pots in empty garden space (such as the vegetable garden) -- pot and all, and mulch with soil or compost (straw works if you don't have rodents). The roots will benefit from ground warmth, just as if they were planted.

If you haven't ordered spring-flowering bulbs for fall planting, such as daffodils and tulips, you can find these this month in many garden stores. If you have deer and other wildlife, think daffodils, as these won't be eaten by them. Daffodils require almost no further care, and will make up large clumps, rewarding you with years of welcoming spring blooms. Try some of the smaller "minor" bulbs too, such as the early snowdrops or late spring summer snowflake.

Gradually condition indoor plants that have spent the summer outdoors to lower light conditions. Move them to a shady spot outdoors for a week, then move them into the sunniest spot indoors for a couple of weeks before moving them to their permanent locations. Dunk them in soapy water to clean the foliage (a sink or bathtub is handy for this), and spray with insecticidal soap if insects are a problem.

Do houseplants need repotting? Now is a good time before bringing them inside. Look for roots coming out of drain holes, white salty fertilizer crust on the pot rim and soil, and lower soil levels in pots. Potting soil gets worn out, so plants should be repotted every year or two.

Other gardening activities for this month include washing and storing feeders after the

hummingbirds migrate south early in the month, and visiting an apple farm.

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

## Stop Pruning Your Roses!

*Mark, Galletta Rose Nursery*

We remove the ugly flowers from our roses all summer -- "deadheading" -- to encourage new flower buds to form. It's now time to stop deadheading because you want the rose plant to form seeds (rose hips) and settle down for the winter.

For similar reasons, you should avoid any pruning until your roses have gone totally dormant in late fall. Pruning now will encourage new lush growth which won't have time to "harden off" for winter. In fact, we don't recommend that you prune your roses at all: there's no need for our hardy roses to be cut back for the winter.

## Fall Asters

*Dr. Leonard Perry, Horticulture Professor  
University of Vermont*

There are many reasons to use fall-blooming asters in landscapes. There is much variety in this large group of hardy perennials, coming in various heights and showy flower colors. You'll find selections in all shades of red, pink, purple, white, and even blue. They're easy to grow, most are native, and they're one of the main plants for bees, butterflies and other pollinators in the fall. They combine well with ornamental grasses, rudbeckia, and coneflowers.

With so many to choose from, how does one begin? In addition to favorite colors, look for ones that best fit your growing conditions, desired habits, and that have disease resistance.

The starburst appearance of the flowers leads to the name "aster", from the Greek word for star. Asters give their name to the large composite family – Asteraceae – that of sunflowers, dahlias, daisies, zinnias, and similar flowers.

Generally, most asters prefer moist, well-drained soil and full sun. There is a range of species, however, that can be grouped by their native environments and corresponding garden preferences. The first group prefers rich, moist soil in full sun. These include the species native

to meadows, prairies and marshes such as the New York (*S. novi-belgii*), New England (*S. novae-angliae*), and flat-topped (*D. umbellata*) asters. They prefer steady moisture. Ones that prefer moist soil, but can tolerate dry sites, include the sky-blue (*S. oolentangiense*), heath (*S. ericoides*), calico (*S. lateriflorum*), aromatic (*S. oblongifolium*), and silky (*S. sericeum*) asters. Tatarian aster (*A. tataricus*) in this group, a Siberian native, is quite adaptable to various soils.

The second group of asters also prefer full sun, along with cool nights, and very well-drained soil. This is because they are native to seashores and mountains where soil drainage is excellent. They may be short-lived over only a few years, particularly if conditions aren't just right. In this group you'll find the European Michaelmas daisy native to Asia Minor (*A. amellus*)—a name often given to many asters as they bloom around this Christian holiday of September 29. Others in this group are the Frikart's (*A. x frikartii*) aster, of garden origin, and East Indies (*A. tongolensis*) aster native to western China and India.

The third group of native aster species tolerate shade (under 4 hours direct sun per day), but bloom better in part shade (4 to 8 hours of direct sun). The blue wood aster (*S. cordifolium*), Drummond's aster (*S. drummondii*), white wood aster (*E. divaricata*), and big leaf aster (*A. macrophyllus*) are in this group. Although they prefer moist soils rich in organic matter (humus), they will tolerate some drought.

In perennial trials at the Chicago Botanic Gardens, 119 asters were evaluated over six years. They were rated based on flowering, health, habit, and hardiness. In this USDA zone 5 site (-10 to -20 degrees F average winter minimum), seven asters stood out with five-star ratings. These top asters included 'Jin Dai' tatarian aster, white wood aster and its cultivar (cultivated variety) 'Eastern Star', 'Snow Flurry' heath aster, calico aster and its cultivar 'Lady in Black', and 'Raydon's Favorite' aromatic aster. For a rock garden or low wall, where cascading stems are desired, 'Snow Flurry' would be a good choice. For perennial gardens and naturalistic landscape masses, good choices would include asters with bushy habits—'Jin Dai', 'Lady in Black', or 'Raydon's Favorite'.

In addition, there were 19 asters that rated good, with four stars. These good asters included a couple of New England asters—the rosy pink 'Harrington's Pink' and deep pink



'Honeysong Pink', and three New York asters- the light lavender 'Blaubox', lavender-blue 'Climax', and purple-pink 'Rosenwichtel'. Most selections you may find of the asters are in the New York and New England species. Perhaps the reasons that more didn't rate more highly relate to habit and potential problems. Aromatic asters tend to be less problem-prone, and good alternative choices.

New England asters can get to four to five feet tall and fall over under some conditions, particularly low light. Cutting them back in early summer by one third to one half will make them more bushy, with no need to stake.

One of the more recent introductions of New England asters, and one of the most popular asters, 'Purple Dome' came from the Mt. Cuba Center and gardens in Delaware. It is violet-purple and low, only growing to about 16 inches high and about 2 feet wide. This makes it a good choice for fronts of borders, along walks, massed, or even containers. It bloomed over two months in Chicago, from early September to early November. 'Vibrant Dome' is a bright pink sport of this compact cultivar, not in these trials but popular and available.

'Purple Dome' is a good example of how resistance to diseases can vary by site. Often considered to have excellent resistance to powdery mildew, in the Chicago trials this cultivar was only rated as fair.

Asters may get rust or powdery mildew diseases on leaves. The former was seen more on the New York asters in the Chicago trials, while the latter disease was seen more on the New England asters. Giving good air circulation around plants, and disposing of leaves in the fall (not in the compost) will help lessen these. There are several sprays, organic and synthetic, that can be used for these too.

A main destructive insect of asters may be the lacebug, a small grayish insect that appears in midsummer and sucks the plant juices from the undersides of leaves, primarily of the New York and related types. Leaves turn yellowish and eventually brown and fall off. Organic or synthetic insect sprays can be used for control. Read and follow all label directions for best control, and safety for you and the environment.

Deer and rabbits can be quite fond of asters, too. There are repellent sprays for these. Low fencing for rabbits, and deer netting for these may be needed if repellents don't work. Keys are to train these animals early in the season, and to rotate among more than one repellent strategy or spray.

Several asters have been bred as alternatives to fall garden mums, including the lavender 'Ariel', violet 'Celeste', and the purple 'Pixie Dark'. Results from the Chicago trials show these only live a year or two, so should be grown as annual flowers. Since the New York asters have problems, and are short-lived, they are not recommended either, even though commonly found.

Keeping asters healthy during the growing season—in part, growing them under the right conditions-- will go a long way toward helping them survive the subsequent winter. More on asters and their culture, as well as other perennial evaluations, can be found in the reports from trials manager Richard Hawke and his Chicago Botanic Garden trials website ([www.chicagobotanic.org/research/plant\\_evaluation](http://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/plant_evaluation)).

## Some saps are better avoided...

There are a few common plants which have a milky, latex-like sap. They can cause damage if their sap gets into the eyes and/or can result in a rash if on the skin. When working with any of the following plants, always wear gloves. Wash smears on your skin with soap as soon as you can afterwards. It is also a good idea to wash any of the tools which you were using for cutting or pruning.

- ~Amsonia *Amsonia* spp.
- ~Balloon flower *Platycodon grandiflorus*
- ~Butterfly weed *Asclepias tuberosa*
- ~Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*
- ~Moonflower *Ipomoea alba*
- ~Poinsettia *Euphorbia pulcherrima*
- ~Vinca *Vinca minor*
- ~Cushion Spurge *Euphorbia polychroma*

~Adapted from *Garden Gate* magazine, April, 2015, Issue 122