



Spring 2005



Compliments of
Unique Garden Centre

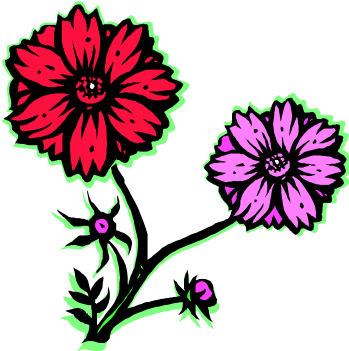
From the Ground Up

Welcome Back Gardeners!

Spring, my favorite time of year!

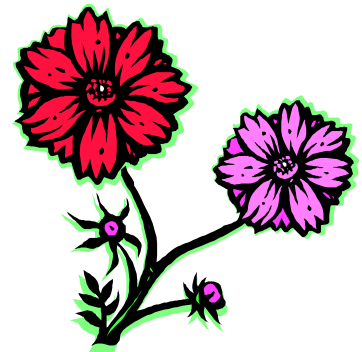
After a long hibernation it feels great to get out of the house, stretch the arms and bask in some heat from the sun. It is a time of renewed friendships with neighbours and kids having toothpick races down the street. The best is wandering around the yard, marveling at the wonders of nature as plants begin their remarkable transition back to life.

As an added bonus this year, we have great news for you. Everyone has been asking for it and now we have it – A Web Page!!! Check us out at www.uniquegardencentre.com It is chock full of information on all kinds of topics from tips for the best plants to grow, to information on the control of certain diseases. Get answers to your questions or give us your feedback - just a click away.



*How many feet are in a
yard?*

*It depends how many
people are standing in it.*





As soon as the snow starts to melt, I am out looking for things to do outside. Spring pruning is a great chore for early spring. Now is the time to prune fruit trees, ornamental flowering trees, ash and linden trees for shape, **but not maple or birch – they bleed.** Shrubs like dogwoods, barberry, hydrangea, honeysuckles, potentilla, cranberries and elders like a spring hair cut too. It is much easier to see which branch or stem needs to be removed before the leaves block your view. Pruning keeps trees and shrubs healthy and controlled in size. Wait until after flowering for shrubs like lilac and Double Flowering Plum. Lilacs and the Double Flowering Plum will suffer reduced or non-existent flowering if pruned in spring. Both of these need to be pruned immediately after flowering. Prune the potentilla after the first main flush of flowers. This helps to keep the plant tidy and promotes more vigorous flowering for the rest of the season. Be sure to learn how to prune properly or you may be putting the plant at risk for disease. Drop in at the Garden Centre and pick up free information on pruning. Wander around your yard to see what

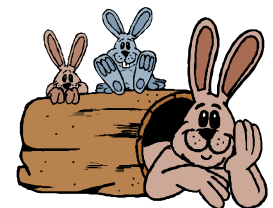
is coming back to life. Remember that some things are not “spring” plants and they like to sleep in, examples would be hostas and oriental lilies because they have been planted so deep. As the world turns green, everything looks young and fresh and full of life. If you planted tubs of tulips, bring them out and put them in your planters and place in the sun. Take time to sketch out your flower beds to estimate how many annuals you will need. Check those notes from last year to help you remember what perennials you will need to fill a gap or add a splash of colour.

Tip For The Season



Although the use of a good quality lawn edging still works the best for a low maintenance yard, here is a manual alternative. To create an edge on your planting bed that prevents the turf area from creeping in, make a vertical cut with a lawn edger or spade as deep as the grass roots go. This edge should be straight up and down. Taper the planting bed to create a V shape (see illustration). You will need to re-cut the turf edge two or three times during the summer to keep the bed edge crisp and defined.

How do you catch a rabbit? Hide behind a tree and make a sound like a carrot.



Spotlight On

Our “Spotlight On” page provides information on a different tree, shrub and perennial in each addition of “From the Ground Up”

Perennial – Heuchera americana ‘Ruby Veil’ Coral Bells

This plant stole my heart when it comes to foliage. A well behaved clump forming perennial with deep green leaves, a metallic red tint and tall stems bearing nodding, green flowers. A long, blooming plant that attracts hummingbirds. It enjoys a location with full sun to partial shade where it will get good snow cover. Height 12”, spreading to 24”. Group them together for a stunning effect beside a group of a different variety of Coral Bells.



Shrub – Juniperus sabina ‘Buffalo’

Known as Buffalo Juniper, this is a dependable variety for the Regina area. It features attractive feathery foliage with good colour year-round. Its low spreading habit makes it a great choice for an evergreen ground cover or for cascading over a wall. Mature size is 12” tall x 6’ wide and prefers a sunny location. Be sure to follow an annual pruning practice to ensure the longevity of this plant.

Tree – Malus x ‘Royal Splendor’

A striking tree that puts on a stunning display of dark red flowers surrounded with reddish purple foliage. Small dark red fruit follows in the summer. In the fall the leaves turn an orange – yellow color. Royal Splendor has improved resistance to Fireblight and Sunscald and is very hardy making it a great choice for any landscape. Mature size is 16’ tall and wide and prefers a sunny location.



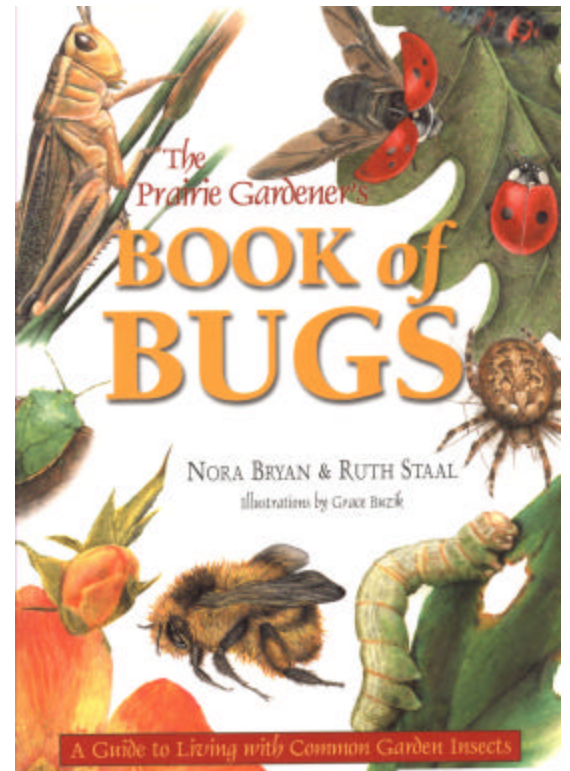
“Gardening is a way of showing that you believe in tomorrow”

Book Section

This issue's book choice is "**The Prairie Gardener's BOOK OF BUGS**"

Written by Nora Bryan and Ruth Staal and illustrated by Grace Buzik

This book is fabulous! Before you run to buy bug killer, check out this book to help you both identify the insect and find out if it is actually a beneficial bug. Specially written for the prairie gardener, it deals with plants that grow here the bugs that bug them. The authors are from Calgary and obviously quite familiar with the trials of winter. Children are often fascinated with bugs in the garden and love to identify what they saw. Visit our garden centre and pick up your copy of "The Prairie Gardener's Book of Bugs" today.



Weeding **Between** The Lines

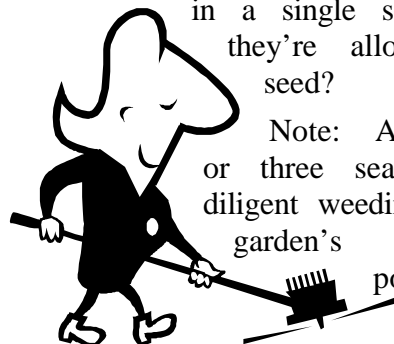
The really maddening thing about weeds is how fast they reproduce. Turn your back on them for a week and you may have to get out a machete. Even if you think that it is too late, just get in there and start weeding. Every bit will pay off. Fortunately, you can outsmart the weeds.

Do a thorough job of getting rid of grasses and perennial weeds before you plant. Never dig or till a weedy or grassy area and plant directly into it—you'll regret it for years.

When you see a weed, pull it—now. Go after weeds when they're small, it is easier to pull or hoe out a tiny weed than one

that's grown a taproot halfway to China.

Oops you missed one and now it has gone to seed. What do you do? Pull it and put it in the trash. Any seeds dispersed will stay viable in the soil for 5-7 years easily! Don't put weeds with seeds in the compost because the seeds can withstand temperatures far above that of an active compost pile. Did you know that annual weeds can spawn a couple of generations in a single season if they're allowed to seed?



Note: After two or three seasons of diligent weeding, your garden's weed population

should go down noticeably.

Mulch is another option to help you reduce the weeding of your yard. Mulch is a term for any non growing material used to cover the surface of the soil. The purpose of mulch is to retain moisture and reduce weed germination. Like most things, mulch has to be installed properly to be effective – especially when trying to deter weeds. It should be at least 3-4" thick. If you add landscape fabric be sure that it is a high quality one (you don't want to be re-doing this job in a couple of years) and your weed control is significantly improved.

A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows.



GETTING TO KNOW US

SHELLEY – EMPLOYEE OF THE SEASON

Well another season is upon us! Hopefully it will be everything last year wasn't. I started with Unique Garden Centre in 1986 this is my 20th year with the company. I started as a greenhouse worker and within a couple of years was promoted to supervisor. I also handled Unique's contract jobs of looking after Government House Conservatory for about 5 years or so. As well as designed some of their outside beds and planted them for several years. We also looked after the plants in what used to be the Mid-Town Centre. These jobs were year round unlike the Garden Centre that only runs seasonal. As Unique grew we had less time for outside contracts and gave that up in order to concentrate on the garden centre. However, we still maintain several contracts of annual plantings in the spring. Each year we have grown and grown as any gardener knows 'you always want more room!' In 1995 I took a government sponsored course to start my own business which I named 'Freedom Gardens' I now take part in growing many of Unique's perennials (especially the Hostas and Lilies) and the mixed flower pots that are sold at Unique. Each year I do more and more. However, I have had a change in my life and in 2003 I moved to Earl Grey. I started up my business there and I continue to grow with many more plans for the years to come, providing Unique with the high quality perennials and annuals they expect. Shelley is celebrating her 20th season with Unique Garden Centre. She works primarily in the greenhouses. Her love and knowledge of plants is evident to everyone she talks with. Shelley is a dedicated worker .

"By the time you find greener pastures, you can't climb the fence!"

SOIL pH – Acid or Alkaline

What is soil pH? It is a scale designed to determine the level of sweet (alkaline) or sour (acidic) of your soil. Why is this important? Well it is one of the factors that influences what plants you can grow well.

It is best to grow plants that like the soil rather than changing soil chemistry to suit the plants, and I confess that, like most gardeners, I've never tested my soil. All across the prairies, our soil tends to be a bit on the alkaline side, but it does vary from region to region as to how alkaline. Let's review what pH is and how it affects your plants. The pH scale measures whether soil is acid or alkaline. The numbers on the scale from 1 to 14, with neutral at pH 7. Levels below 7 are considered acidic, levels above 7 are alkaline. Most plants prefer a slightly acidic soil pH of 6 to 6.5. When the soil pH falls outside this range, the plants ability to retrieve certain nutrients from the soil is reduced, effectively starving the plant. Many plants grow quite well still in soil with a pH of up to 7.5. By pH 8, growing anything is a struggle.

If adjusting the soil pH levels was easy or inexpensive this would be a common practice. Here in Regina, the soil is alkaline and if any adjusting is done, it is to lower the pH. So how can that be done? A common problem in our soils is lack of organic matter. Although most know that this affects the drainage of the soil, few realize that it also affects the pH. Try working peat moss and manure into the soil. Both are great for helping to lower the pH. If the problem is severe, adding garden sulphur to the soil is suggested but getting a soil test first will improve the success of this treatment by finding out just how much you need. As the rains move the sulphur about the soil, it's effectiveness will diminish, so it is recommended that this treatment be repeated every two or three years. Again improving the amount of organic matter will help and when using these kinds of drastic measures it is strongly advisable to obtain a soil test.

Gardening Rule:

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

