



Spring 2008



# From the Ground Up ↑

*“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*



There are a few hardy souls who will plant a large garden but most of us will enjoy spring in smaller ways. Maybe this is the year to add a few shrubs to the front of your house or to put in that small perennial border.

At **Unique Garden Centre**, our plants are arriving and the experienced staff are preparing for your visit. We are ready to assist you with all the latest information and gardening trends. Whether you have a large garden or just want to plant a few annuals for some colour, come on in and see what's new for container gardening, new plant varieties, and the latest gardening accessories.

Careful though, gardening can be addictive!



## BUILD BACKYARD BIODIVERSITY



While some insects and birds can be a problem in your garden, others play an important role in pollination and in pest control. Most flowering plants, for example, depend on pollinators such as bees to help in fertilization. Other beneficial insects prey on garden pests. Predators such as ladybugs, dragonflies and wasps will only lay eggs where there are plenty of aphids to feed their young.

The problem with using pesticides is that they kill not only the pest species but also the pollinators and predators. With a non-chemical approach to gardening, you can begin to increase the biological diversity in your backyard.

Creating a garden attractive to pollinators and predators requires some planning. But you'll quickly discover a healthy garden that's in harmony with its native ecosystem.

\* Chose native flowers that are abundant in nectar and pollen...Prairie Crocus(*Anemone patens*), Blanketflower (*Gaillardia aristata*), Yarrow(*Achillea millifolium*), Hyssop(*Agastache foeniculum*), Blue Flax(*Linum perrene*), Blazing Star(*Liatris punctata*), Goldenrod(*Solidago* species)

\* Plant for a spectrum of blooming times to feed pollinators from spring through fall.



\* Include trees, shrubs, perennials, vines, bulbs and annuals of many different species and varieties to encourage different birds, predator insects, and cover for garter snakes, toads and salamanders.

# Planning and Planting:

## DIVIDING PERENNIALS

Spring is the best time to divide most perennials although there are a few exceptions. Divide spring flowering plants when they have finished blooming.

A perennial needs dividing when:

- ☼ plants are over crowded.
- ☼ the centre of the plant becomes weak or dies.
- ☼ fewer blooms appear on a mature plant than in the past.
- ☼ overall the plant is smaller than in previous years.

Once the plant is showing new growth in the spring (1-2" but less than 4")

- ☼ dig up the entire clump, taking as many big roots as possible. A long narrow spade works well for this. Dig all the way around the clump and then pry it out of the ground.
- ☼ Move the clump onto a tarp or grass and remove some of the loose soil.
- ☼ Examine the clump to see where it can most easily be divided.
- ☼ Using a sharp knife, cut the plant apart at these points. If there is no obvious point just cut the entire clump in half. It is important that each piece have green shoots above ground and roots below.
- ☼ Depending on how large the clump is you could divide it several times. The best and most vigorous pieces will generally be towards the outside of the clump where the roots are less woody. They will recover more quickly and develop into healthy new plants. Some plants will come apart quite easily at the roots but some will require a lot more effort to separate.

When you have finished dividing the clump it is time to replant. Now is also a good time to enrich the soil by adding compost or well rotted manure. Try to plant the new smaller clumps at the same depth they were originally. Water well at planting time and once a week thereafter depending on the amount of rainfall received.

Note:

Peonies, true lilies, oriental poppies, and bleeding heart are best divided in the fall.



### CREATE A VERTICAL EXPLOSION

When you're planning and planting, whether with annuals, perennials, shrubs, bulbs or containers, tall plants shouldn't just be considered for the back rows. Staggering tall, vertical plants throughout the width of your border and adding them into containers will create depth, develop rhythm and create focal points. Include plants whose outline can be described with words like spiky, spire, needle, columnar, narrow or upright. Just a short list could include Alliums, Astilbe, Blue Oat Grass, Delphiniums, Foxglove, Goat's Beard, Hollyhock, Yellow Flag or Siberian Iris, Karl Foerster Reed Grass, Liatris, Ligularia, Lilies, Lupines, Monkshood, Ostrich Fern, & Russian Sage amongst the perennials;

Bells of Ireland, Red Star Dracaena, Giant Imperial Larkspur, Nicotiana, Rocket Snapdragon, Stocks, and Sunflower amongst the annuals.

# Garden Gadgets:

**Floating row covers** are white, lightweight spunbonded polypropylene material used to improve plant growth, organically protect against many types of pests and extend the growing season. They are excellent barriers to insect pests such as aphids, carrot rust fly, cabbage moth & maggots, flea beetles, blister beetles, and potato beetles. They also stop many pests whose feeding transmits plant diseases and frustrate small animals and birds. They are used by covering newly seeded rows or pest-free transplants with row covers, leaving plenty of slack in the material to allow for growth. The edges are buried in the soil or sealed in some way to prevent pests sneaking in. The light weight covers are designed to allow rain or watering and sunlight to pass easily through. Row covers can be left over some crops such as lettuce, carrots, potatoes or onions, all season, removed only when harvesting is required. Some crops need to be uncovered during flowering to allow pollination, such as cucumber, squash, beans, or peas. Heavier weight row covers are used in fall to provide frost protection, extending our gardening season.



## A HEALTHY GARDEN

When you see a curled leaf or an insect on your favourite plants, it may not be a problem that requires a chemical solution. Most plants can tolerate minor insect or disease presence. If plants are looking well, growing at the expected rate, and show minimal insect or disease damage, than the best action is to monitor more frequently for the near future. Identify the insect or disease and choose the least toxic controls first. The presence of a diverse insect community should be considered a good sign, not a need to reach for toxic chemical controls.



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