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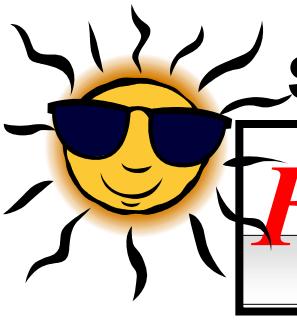
Unique Garden Centre



Summer 2005

From the Ground Up ↑

FIGHTING THE ENEMY

Aphids. The little bright green bugs that land on our shirts in the summer are not only an annoyance to humans, but also have devastating effects on trees when large numbers are prevalent. Aphids are small in size with long antennae and are not always green in colour. Some can be yellow, pink, red, grey, black or brown. Due to the fact that female aphids are able to reproduce without the help of males, and that most aphids born are female, this may lead to over population in areas very quickly.

Aphids enjoy feeding on such plants as cabbage, peas, potato plants, tomato plants, beans, roses, ornamental flowers, birch trees, elm trees, ash trees, maple trees, oak trees, pine trees, as well as other trees and shrubs. When aphids feed on these plants, they suck out the sap that contains sugar leading to reduced growth in plants, wilting and drying of leaves and branches. If you spot a few aphids there is no need to panic. Aphids form an important part of the ecosystem, feeding beneficial insects and birds. However infestations can cause damage and needs to be addressed.

To prevent these insects from ruining your plant material, there are three different methods: help from nature, physically fixing the problem yourself and relying on chemicals. Although we may find other bugs annoying, they do help control the aphid population by their rapid consumption of these insects. Bugs such as lacewings, assassin bugs, syrphid fly larvae, adult wasps, spiders, and ladybugs (ladybug larvae consume the most aphids out of all bugs), contribute to the reduction in population. In contrast there are also insects that promote the reproduction of aphids. Some types of ants like to "farm" aphids because aphids produce a sticky sap like substance that is secreted from their body. Also chickadees help to eat and control aphid populations. So the next time you think about squishing that spider or running from that wasp, just remember they are helping to save your trees and shrubs from overpopulation of aphids or any other type of insect. To attract these predators, plant such plants as tansy and marigolds. The second method is for the yard owner to physically remove these bugs. Spraying a steady, well pressured stream of water at infected areas knock the bugs to the ground where there is no food and predators can easily find them. Another trick is to add something yellow that will attract the bugs, as they are very drawn to the colour yellow. Adding such things as a yellow cue card with petroleum jelly or a yellow bucket filled with soap and water help to reduce the numbers of aphids infecting your trees. Finally if no other method will work, there are insecticides that will prevent overpopulation. It is best to use a chemical that is both safe for you and the environment. Sprays that are not environmentally friendly may harm other insects and animals that help control populations of harmful bugs such as aphids. If nothing helps with the overpopulation of aphids, it may be necessary to destroy the infected plant to prevent future infestation.

Aphids are pesky little bugs. If you have an aphid problem and nothing seems to be working for you, contact the Garden Centre for other possible options to rid yourself from these pests.

It Is Time For Summer Holidays!

In true Saskatchewan fashion, the weather has been a little less than predictable to say the least. Hopefully the sun will shine for awhile and the plants and crops will grow and we can all celebrate a bountiful Thanksgiving. First let's not look quite so far in advance and talk about summer. The kids are out of school and families are planning holidays and BBQ's and I have a newsletter full of summer topics for you. So slap on the sunscreen, put on mosquito netting or spray and pack the umbrella and jacket for that predictably unpredictable weather and enjoy our Land of the Living Skies.

Spotlight On

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

OHIO BUCKEYE (*Aesculus glabra)*

This large tree, when mature, reaches 7.5-15m in both length and width. The sheer size of this plant makes it a great tree to have if you enjoy lounging outside in the shade on a hot day. The foliage is a lush green during the growing season. In the late spring, cream colored flowers are prevalent. Along with the flowers, this tree produces spiny shelled nuts that are a pleasant snack for squirrels, but are not good for humans to eat. Shady, to partial shady conditions are favored by the Ohio Buckeye, as their leaves may become dried out if planted in a windy and dry area of your yard.

BAILEY'S CRANBERRY (*Virburnum trilobum 'Bailey's Compact')*

The Bailey's Cranberry shrub shows a dark green colour in the summer, but turns an eye catching bright red colour in the fall. An attractive feature of this shrub is that it requires very little maintenance. Although flowers and berries are few and far between, one can increase the chance of the occurrence if two or more bushes are planted beside each other. At mature size the Bailey's Cranberry reaches a height and width of 1.5 m x 1.5 m.

GOAT'S BEARD *(Aruncus dioicus)*

This perennial blooms in early to mid summer and does best when planted in partial shade. For about a month in the summer the Goat's Beard sports ivory flowers which can be used in flower arrangements and when cut, last for at least a week. An interesting feature about this plant is that it can do well in almost any kind of soil. Planting hostas or elephant ears along side this perennial adds an attractive contrast in leaf texture. At mature size, the Goat's Beard can become up to 1.5m high and 1m wide.

Why do potatoes make good detectives?
Because they keep their eyes peeled.

SEEDS: STOPPING THE SPREAD

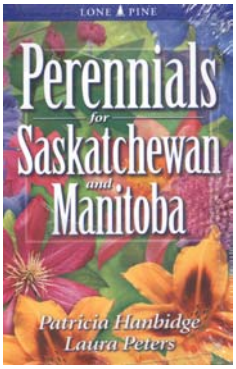
To gardeners the term deadheading means simply, to remove flowers after they have died to prevent any seeds from forming.

There are three main reasons for deadheading; each targets a different plant type. It is important to deadhead annuals so you can fool the plant into making flowers for the rest of the growing season. Annuals believe that once there has been a formation of seeds, the plant has done its job and will not produce anymore flowers, so if you want to see the beauty of the flowers this is an important task. Most shrubs and perennials do not require deadheading to preserve their natural beauty, but rather to extend their lives. Producing seeds is difficult on any plant, so removing flowers before they go to seed ensures your plant will not have to work so hard thus resulting in a healthier plant. Finally, seeds produce seedlings. Not very many people enjoy weeding, so to prevent any seedlings that are not welcome from showing up, it is important to deadhead. The same idea goes for weeds. Pulling off the wilted flowers when you have time will save you from having to pull out the seedlings/weeds later on in the summer and in years to come.

Book Section

This issue's book pick is **"Perennials for Saskatchewan and Manitoba"** written by Patricia Hanbidge and Laura Peters.

If you want to add colour to your yard, but need help finding the right perennial, this book is for you! Written specifically for the prairie gardener, this book contains tips and information on your favorite perennials (and many more), when to plant, the water/light/nutrition needs and informs gardeners on the best suited perennials for the conditions of their yard. Filled with pages of information and colored pictures, this book is every gardeners dream come true. Stop by the Garden Centre and treat yourself to a copy.



THE FRIENDLY BUMBLE BEE

Most people admit to tensing up when they hear the familiar buzz of the bumble bee. Along with that fear comes a desire to rid the world of these vicious creatures. In reality bumble bees should not be seen as pests, but as welcome guests to your yard. Bumble bees are not aggressive and will only sting people as a last resort. The bee is responsible for helping many flowers reproduce as they are a good source of cross-pollination. Cross pollination when pollen from a plant is carried over to the flower of a related plant usually via wind or insects. When bees land on a flower they collect bits of pollen on their legs which is transferred to the next plant they land on. There are certain plants that will attract these yellow and black creatures to your yard, both during the day and the evening. In Saskatchewan, the purple coneflower and veronica are popular attractors during daylight hours and at night bees have been spotted curling up in the petals of Dahlias.

I once came across a bumble bee nest in my yard in an inappropriate place when doing my spring clean up. I simply used a shovel to pick up the loose nest and relocate it to a safe place.

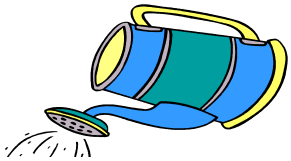
GETTING TO KNOW US

CAROL: SUMMER EMPLOYEE OF THE SEASON

Carol joined the Unique team approximately 19 years ago. Her main focus has been the greenhouses. Her love for the greenhouse is shown further as she has started her own called Willow Bend Gardens and supplies some of the annuals and perennials to Unique Garden Centre. Carol loves her annuals, her favorite being Geraniums (pelargonium). Although she still oversees some of the greenhouse duties, she also works in nursery sales

Carol is a model employee. She always has a smile, rain or shine. Her dedication to detail and her ability to find answers to even the smallest problem makes her the obvious choice for employee of the season. Carol is yet another reason why Unique Garden Centre stands out as the place to go for quality plants, accurate information and a friendly smile.

WISE WATERING



Although we are hearing about many areas still flooding and praying for the rain to stop, many cities and towns are still experiencing tighter regulations on watering because of water shortages. Here are some tips on watering and the different methods of getting your lawn and plants the water they need to look great when Mother Nature does not cooperate.

There are many methods of watering, each with their own pros and cons. One method of watering is to use the natural water that has fallen during a rain storm. To collect this rain, it is best to use a rain barrel. The advantage of using this water is that you ensure there is no chlorine in your water and it is unlikely there will be any other chemicals in the water. Newer water barrels have a tap high enough to fit a water can and tap at the bottom to hook a hose to. Pumps can be added as well. Even a light rain can fill a rain barrel. Another way to keep your plants fresh and green is to water from a hose or a can. This ensures that all plants are getting the water they need as you will be watering each one directly. Finally, as technology is becoming bigger and better, we have devised computerized watering systems that turn on at the first sign of daylight. This method makes things easy for the home owner, but can be designed to water only certain zones at certain times.

Plants lose water quite fast on a hot day, but there are ways to prevent soil evaporation. To prevent loss of water from soil, you can put a 5-8 cm layer of mulch on top of the soil. Plan flower beds in such a manner that drought resistant plants and those plants that require more water are grouped together, making it easier when watering. Plants that have just been planted or moved require more water than usual for about two to three years so they can develop strong root systems.

Tips for watering your lawn range from the way in which they should be watered to the time of day best suited for watering. Lawns should be watered from overhead. The best time to water grass is in the morning, but evening is also good. Try not to water during the day, because the water will evaporate in the heat of the afternoon.

A simple method to figure out when your grass is requiring water; when the soil is dry about 10-15 cm from the top, it is time to water. During the summer when it is hot out, this is usually twice a week. Most important, remember that you don't have to water often, but when you do water, water generously. It is a common problem that lawns in Regina do not receive the proper amount of water. Regina has a heavy clay soil which means it does not absorb water very fast. A common mistake homeowners make is under watering. When water begins to pool on the surface of their lawn, people rush to turn off the water, but if they checked, often only 1/2" to an inch below the surface would be wet and thus the roots would still be dry. Not allowing the water to reach the roots makes for shallow roots and this damages lawns or plants.

You can enjoy your yard this summer and still save time and money. Follow these simple guidelines and you will have a great looking lawn and saved money at the same time.

A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken

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SUMMER HOLIDAY CHECKLIST

We all have forgotten to do something before leaving on holidays. To alleviate some of the stress caused by planning for a trip, we have made a checklist of things to ensure the survival of your yard while you're on your peaceful getaway.

- ✓ Find someone to look after yard and plants
- ✓ Put container gardens together in the shady side of the yard to make things easier to water and to ensure they will not dry out as fast
- ✓ Inform your house/yard sitter on the particulars of your yard:
  - *how often your lawn and plants require cutting or watering
  - *where the gas can for your lawn mower is (if gone for an extended period, where they can get the money to refill the can)
  - *where the water shut off is inside incase there is a problem
  - *the phone number to the irrigation company
  - *instructions on how to use the manual/automatic irrigation system

What do you call a grumpy and short tempered gardener?
A Snap Dragon.