



Spring 2015



Compliments of

Unique Garden Centre

From the Ground Up ↑

Marvelous Mockoranges

The name Mockorange refers to the intensely sweet orange blossom fragrance of most

varieties of these shrubs. Flowers vary from ¾” to 1½” across and can be either single or double flowering. Their great virtue is that they provide abundant blooms in late June/early July between spring flowering shrubs and fall colours. There is a range in sizes from 3’-6’ and even a golden leaf variety. All are hardy, tolerating poor soil and windy sites. Best effects are in rich well-drained soil with full to ½ day sun. Because mockoranges bloom on the previous year’s wood, they should be pruned immediately after flowering, removing spent flower tips back to a strong growing bud or shoot.

Mockoranges are more commonly planted as a single specimen, but could be placed 18” apart to form a hedge or screen.

Because of their wonderful scent, they should be planted close to sitting areas, walkways or opening windows.

Golden leaf varieties are set off beautifully when planted against a darker background such as a dark stained fence or siding or a dark-leaved shrub such as Diabolo Ninebark.

As this shrub has a relatively short bloom time, a clematis planted at its base and trained to grow through its branches or other flowering shrubs with different bloom times would add a longer season of interest giving texture and colour to an otherwise rather ordinary shrub.

Mockoranges are relatively easy to care for. Top dress with a 2.5cm layer of compost in the spring and fall. Apply a 5cm layer of shredded bark in the shrub bed to suppress weeds and conserve moisture.

Thin out crowded branches to promote good air circulation and allow light to penetrate into the centre of the shrubs.

If aphids become a problem, they can be dislodged with a forceful stream of water.

Three of our favourite varieties are:



Blizzard Mockorange *Philadelphus lewisii* ‘Blizzard

Height and spread: 5’ x 3’

Zone 2



Golden Mockorange *Philadelphus cornarius* ‘Aureus’

Height and spread: 3’ x 3’

Zone 3



Snowbelle Mockorange *Philadelphus* ‘Snowbelle’

Height and spread: 4’ x 4’

Zone 3



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amazing asparagus

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It is sometimes called the 'Food of Kings', perhaps because the tops look like miniature crowns but more likely because King Louis XIV of France (1638–1715) was a great fan. He encouraged its production in Europe during his reign, going so far as to build glass greenhouses so he could enjoy the tasty spears all year long. Julius Caesar and Thomas Jefferson are also noted as having a liking for asparagus. It was popular in ancient times in Greece, Rome and Egypt.

The tasty spears we consume were originally bred from plants that were native to central Europe and western and central Asia. The ancient Greeks ate it from the wild but it has been cultivated since Roman times.

Originally used as a medicinal plant, it was thought to be the cure-all for many ailments including toothaches, bee stings, heart trouble, edema, constipation, insomnia. Today there is no real medicinal value associated with asparagus, however, it is rich in vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber.

Its real appeal is the delicate flavour. Steamed, roasted, grilled or broiled with a bit of olive oil and lemon juice, asparagus is a delicious springtime treat.

Soil and Situation

Asparagus will grow in most soils but a pH of 6.5-7.5 is preferable. Good drainage and freedom from perennial weeds are essential. Dig a 3" dressing of well-rotted manure or compost into the top foot of soil in the fall or early spring before planting. Asparagus roots tend to develop laterally so it is best to maintain the food supply in the top portion of soil. Asparagus grow best in an open and sunny site.

Planting and the First Two Years

Never let the bare root crowns dry out, choose a damp day for planting and leave the crowns wrapped until the last minute. In mid April dig a trench about 10 inches deep and 15 inches wide for each row. Make a ridge in the bottom of the trench and place each crown at 18 inch intervals on the ridge, with the roots spread outward over the ridge and the top buds on the root crowns 2" below the finished soil surface. Cover them quickly and carefully with fine soil to fill in the trench. If more than one row is planted, space rows 4 feet apart.

Hand weed regularly and never cultivate deeply or dig near a bed because asparagus roots spread out widely and are easily damaged. Each spring, top-dress the rows with 2-3 inches of compost or well rotted manure.

Harvesting

Do not cut any spears until the third season after planting. Eventual heavy cropping depends on a slow build-up of crown size, starting with the all important first two seasons, when no cutting should be done.

The cutting season for asparagus is from the middle of May to late June, and no longer. Cut all the spears when they are 5-6 inches above ground, even if they vary in thickness. In the first year that you harvest, cut for a period of six weeks after the first shoots appear. In subsequent years the cutting period can be up to eight weeks. Cut the spears off at an angle, 1-2" below the soil surface. An asparagus crown produces many small shoots at different stages of maturity and it is important to cut the spears cleanly and carefully so that the plant will continue to crop.

Maintaining

From June onwards the ferns must be allowed to grow in order to play their vital role in building up food reserves in the crown for the following year's crop. To encourage this growth, apply a general balanced fertilizer suitable for vegetables at the recommended package rate, immediately after the last cutting. When the ferns have turned yellow, and not before, cut them down to ground level. Clear away any debris, such as dried leaves and stems and top-dress with a 2-3" depth of compost.

As with most perennial vegetables, the hardest part is getting started, finding a spot that can be used year after year and which is suitable for the crop. After the work has been done, asparagus graciously rewards your efforts every May and June for several years.



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All a bee wants is a quick sip of nectar, some tasty pollen and maybe some building materials to take back to its nest. In return it pollinates flowers, which allows for fertilization, which then creates the fruits, seeds and nuts that we enjoy.

Bee helpful...

Aid pollinators by planting a diversity of nectar and pollen producing species that provide blooms from early spring through fall. Include native plants and avoid the use of pesticides as much as possible.

Bee attractive...

Plant Saskatoon, Dogwood, Johnny jump up, Sunflower (*Helianthus* spp), Monarda, Rudbeckia, Stonecrop (*Sedum* spp), Solidago and Veronica.

By planting bee-attracting plants and flowers, you will also attract a diverse array of other pollinators and wildlife. Butterflies, wasps, flies and hummingbirds will give a bountiful harvest. Keep an eye out, and enjoy the comings and goings of pollinators in your backyard.

Don't Work Soil Too Wet

Now that spring is here we are usually eager to get outside and get going in the yard. However here in the Regina area the soil is heavy clay and takes a long time to dry out. Resist the temptation to work your soil if it is wet. Doing so destroys the structure of the soil resulting in clods that may not break down all summer. To determine if a soil is too wet to work, grab a handful and squeeze. If water comes out it is **much too wet!** Even if no water drips out it is likely not dry enough to work. Push a finger into the soil you squeezed. If it crumbles, it is dry enough but if your finger just leaves an indentation, it needs more time to dry. Take handfuls of soil from the depth you plan to work, because deeper soils will contain more moisture than the surface.

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