

Summer 2012

**Unique Garden Centre**

From the Ground Up



Water needs can be greatly reduced by heavy mulching and choosing drought tolerant plants, but they can not be entirely eliminated. This is most apparent in the vegetable garden where plants must sprout, grow, flower and produce all in the hottest part of the year.

Careful planning and timing can reduce some watering needs. By planting such vegetables as potatoes, peas, leeks, onions, radishes, spinach and lettuce as soon as the soil can be worked, you are able to take advantage of natural soil moisture to help get the plants established.

Group water dependent crops like cabbage, broccoli, cucumbers, melons and tomatoes closer together to make watering easier and more practical as the season heats up. Sprawling plants such as zucchini and pumpkin can be mulched heavily to slow evaporation from the soil surface and eliminate weeds that rob moisture and nutrients. Annual flower beds, newly planted trees and shrubs, and perennials, especially those in full flower, will also need some watering. Established permanent plantings only need water if the top 5cm of soil feels dry or plants are showing signs of stress such as dull or drooping leaves.

It is best to water early in the morning. This minimizes evaporation and allows foliage to dry out, thus avoiding fungal diseases. Most importantly it gives the plants water before they are stressed by the afternoon heat. As with most stressful situations, preventing water stress is better than curing it.

To encourage good root growth, enough water should be applied to moisten the top 15cm of soil. Sandy soil may need watering once a week while clay soil holds water much longer. Don't guess how much moisture is in the soil. Dig your hand into it and find out.

A hand held wand on the end of a hose gives the most plant friendly results with the least waste. Make sure it has a shut off valve. A soaker hose is also a good option. Try to deliver the water as close to the soil as possible rather than onto the top growth. The plants need a drink not a shower.

Pots need special attention. Again, it is best to test the soil by sticking your finger in it to judge moisture content. Containers need less water on cool, overcast days and much more when it is hot or windy. It is a good idea to move containers to a sheltered spot during heat waves. Remember to hold the wand or watering can close to the soil level to prevent water running off the leaves and over the edge of the pot. Apply water only until it runs from the drainage holes. Use of moisture holding crystals in the potting soil of your containers can greatly reduce watering frequency. If potted plants wilt despite daily watering, maybe they need a larger container or a shadier location.



Spotlight On

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



Candytuft
Iberis semperivrens

This spring blooming perennial groundcover has clusters of small white flowers in late spring. The evergreen foliage forms a nice compact mound. Prune lightly after blooming. This perennial prefers full sun to part shade and well drained soil. It will grow to a size of 15-20 cm tall and 30-60 cm wide and is hardy to zone 3.

Siberian Pearls Dogwood
Cornus alba ‘Siberian Pearls’



This dogwood has showy white berries that turn blue in the fall, excellent red fall colour and stunning red branches which are very showy against winter snow. Throughout the season it has dark green leaves. It prefers full sun to part shade and will tolerate both dry and wet conditions once established. It will grow to a height of 2.5m and spread about 2m. but its size can be easily maintained by regular pruning. It is hardy to zone 2b.



Spring Snow Flowering Crabapple
Malus ‘Spring Snow’

This beautiful tree is covered with fragrant white flowers in spring. It has glossy dark green foliage throughout the season turning yellow in the fall. This is a fruitless variety which makes it an ideal accent tree for smaller spaces. There is no mess to worry about cleaning up. It prefers full sun and well drained soil and will mature to a height of 7.5m and a canopy spread of 4.5m. It is hardy to zone 3.

Haskap/Honeyberry

Haskap (*Lonicera caerulea*) is an amazingly hardy, fast growing, high yielding, great tasting berry bush that originates from Siberia. It can be found in Russia, China, and Japan. It goes by the names 'Honeyberry', 'Blue Honeysuckle', and 'Haskap'. In recent years it has been developed at the University of Saskatchewan for commercial production in Canada. For the home gardener, Haskap has several features that might make it worth growing.

It is extremely hardy able to withstand winter temperatures of -47° C. Its open flowers can endure -7° Celsius. They are the earliest to fruit in the season, usually in mid to late June – even earlier than strawberries.

The best variety for the home gardener is Borealis. This is the variety with the largest size berry and best flavour. Tundra is another variety for good eating. Both need a pollinator of an unrelated variety such as Polar Jewel or Berry Blue.

One of the greatest things about Haskap is that it begins to produce at a young age. In the studies at the University of Saskatchewan, seedlings were yielding 1 kg (2.2 lbs.) per plant in their 3rd year and 4 kg per plant in their 6th year.

The taste of Haskap has been compared to a combination of blueberries and raspberries, although the flavor seems to vary with varieties. The seeds are similar to that of kiwis, so you don't even notice them. They can be used the same as blueberries: eat them fresh, use them in baking, make jams & jellies, or freeze them.

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A perfect **Summer** day is when the sun is shining,
 the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing,
 and the lawn mower is broken
 ~James Dent



Common Gardening Questions

Should plants showing signs of stress be fertilized?

Often a plant showing signs of stress is not nutrient deficient. Other factors such as compacted soil, too much heat, faulty planting or improper watering are the cause for distress. Adding fertilizer without correcting the primary problem may actually make matters worse.

Should new pruning cuts be coated with varnish, tar or paint?

Often these wound dressings hold moisture near the new wound which helps the various fungal decay organisms thrive. A clean cut just outside the branch collar left to heal on its own is best. If pruned properly, healthy trees have natural defence mechanisms to ward off most fungal decay problems. Wound dressings are only necessary if a pruning cut is made after August 1st.

Will sunshine focused through water droplets burn leaves?

The diffused rays of the sun will not cause burning. In general, the best time to water is early in the morning when the evaporation rate will be lower and to reduce to potential of foliar diseases that can occur in overly moist situations. If midday watering is your only choice, then water.

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