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“Wow - What A Ride!”

Welcome back Readers! It all had to come to this - as I write this I’m plugged into my MP3 player . . . and liking it!

This is quite a step for a guy who has progressed through 45s, 33 1/3 LPs, 4-track tapes, 8-track tapes, cassettes, CDs and now MP3s . . . whew, what a ride!

I still peruse the seed catalogs, but now if I see something I like, I hit the internet search for more information before I buy. Again, this is a guy who has passed through the TRS80, IBM BC8886, DOS, Apple, Windows, Windows for Workgroups and so on. I love it! Give me more!

This Spring, weeding will be even more pleasurable when I plug in the MP3 and “shuffle” Frank Sinatra, the Rolling Stones, and Fergie . . . ah, what a ride!

I ran across a quote from an unknown author that I’d like to share with you. I think it fits me to a “T”:

“Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty, well-preserved body, but rather to slide in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaming, WOW - WHAT A RIDE!”

I’m not ready to “slide in broadside” yet, but the pedal is still to the metal. I’ve only lost one drag race out of many, so far. I aim to keep on winning.

See ‘ya in the garden in the Spring, and remember, if you’re not livin’ - well, you just fill in the rest of it - cause I’m off laying a brodie in the dirt (soil) headfirst - and liking it!

Who said gardening isn’t competitive. Let the gardens begin! “Wow - what a ride!”

“Potting Soil Recipe - Mix Up A Batch”

While getting ready for outdoor or indoor planting, you can make your own potting soil. Here is a simple way to have good soil ready for Spring seeds or seedlings.

Itchy gardeners can get ready to grow by mixing up potting soil for starting seeds. Mixing up your own is more economical than buying potting mix (and backyard soil won’t work as well). A good potting soil is fine textured and free of pests, diseases and weed seeds, low in fertility and soluble salts, and capable of holding and moving water.

A good basic soil for starting things is a mixture of 1/3 pasteurized soil or finished compost, 1/3 sand or perlite, and 1/3 peat moss.

Sand, peat moss and perlite are available at most nurseries and garden stores.
Garden Chore Checklist

Spring is a good time to evaluate the condition of your yard, lawn, flower beds and vegetable gardens—so it’s time to get started on your Springtime gardening chores:

- Clean up dead foliage and debris you didn’t take care of in the Fall.
- Apply compost or an all-purpose plant food to your established garden beds; add a two to three inch layer of organic mulch to keep weeds in check and to regulate moisture.
- Add compost/manure to your garden and rottotill if necessary.
- Check your plants for insect infestations and diseases; prune out damaged stems.
- Apply lawn fertilizer in mid to late March.
- Prune young trees before they leaf out - remove damaged and crossing branches or limbs.
- Make sure all danger of frost is over before moving potted plants back outdoors.
- Plant potatoes, onions, peas and lettuce as soon as the ground can be worked.
- Start tuberous begonias indoors.
- Plan a container garden if you lack in-ground gardening space.
- Cut and remove weeds near the garden to remove sources of plant virus diseases.

Critter Control—Guests vs. Pests

Spring opens the door to a lot of uninvited guests and pests to your garden. Be it vegetables, flowers, trees, lawns or other flora, there is danger out there!

There are a number of things you can do now to encourage good “guests” and discourage bad “pests”.

- Get ready to plant flowers and other plants to invite good “guest” creatures. A small garden plot of flowering plants designed to attract and harbor beneficial insects is a good method of natural pest control. Beneficial insects prey on many common garden insect pests and offer a natural alternative to pesticides. Intersperse your vegetable garden or beds with rows or small groupings of beneficial flowers—this will not only lure beneficial insects but will also look appealing. Plants of varying heights will provide an optimum residence, as will plants with large quantities of tiny flowers (as opposed to single, large blooms). As your plantings mature and become established, your garden will become a more balanced environment for growing your veggies.
- If the “pests” are overcoming the “guests” and you feel you must use extraordinary means to deal with them, use the least aggressive control methods before you resort to chemicals. Always identify and monitor problems before acting. Then consider cultural controls, then physical, biological, and as a last resort, chemical control. Always consider the least toxic approach first. If you feel a need to use chemical control always remember—the label is the law! Carefully read the pesticide label and follow it exactly.

Flower of the Month

March

Jonquil

- Jonquil: perennial; blooms early Spring to mid Spring.
- Prefers loamy, neutral, well-drained soil.
- Naturalizes well; good for cutting; fragrant.

April

Sweet pea

- Sweet Pea: annual; blooms early to late Summer.
- Prefers loamy, neutral, well-drained soil.
- Good for arbors and ground cover; fragrant.

Happy St. Patrick’s Day!
St. Patrick’s Day is March 17th—plant spuds!

Plants That Attract Beneficial Insects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plants That Attract Beneficial Insects</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alyssum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-Eyed Susans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butterfly Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caraway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clover</td>
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<td>Coriander</td>
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<td>Dill</td>
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<td>Fennel</td>
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<td>Goldenrod</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marigolds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mint &amp; Catnip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nasturtiums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Anne’s Lace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunflowers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yarrow</td>
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Garden Humor (No Writers Strike Here!)

In the January/February issue of Garden Highlights I sent out a request (actually it was a plea) to my readers to submit some garden humor, stories, jokes, etc. to share with everyone. My whining paid off! The following are some of the submissions. A big thanks—and keep ‘em coming!

Careful Where You Leave The List!

“Shortly after I married, my new “city boy” husband, who didn’t know a leaf lettuce from a head lettuce, was going to do me a favor by going to the grocery store for me as I had just had surgery and was still in the lay around recuperate stage. He asked me if the list was on the table and without looking I said ‘yes’. It was a short list, just the necessities; milk, bread, tomatoes, etc. About 3 hours later he finally returned from the store and proceeded to carry in bag, after bag, after bag of groceries...8 of them in all! He started to explain that he had difficulty figuring out what some of the items were on the list and that he had even asked the produce manager for help, who also had difficulty figuring out some of the items. I began looking through the bags and it was a produce haven...everything you could imagine finding in the produce section...there was at least one of, if not several. At this point I began to wonder just what list he had picked up off the kitchen table...Yep...you got it... he had picked up my wish list of everything I WANTED to plant in the garden - but didn’t have room for. To add insult to injury, where I had noted a number (meaning the number of rows I wanted to plant), he assumed it meant number of items. So 4 rows of carrots translated to 4 bags of carrots...and so on...you get the picture! Not surprised, there was no milk or bread in the grocery bags!”

- submitted by Robin (Fossil, Oregon)

“I garden; therefore I weed!”

- submitted by Leanna (Eugene, Oregon)

“What was green and a great trick shooter? Annie Okra.”

- submitted by Kyle (age 9) (White Salmon, Washington)

National Arbor Day is April 25th - plant a tree!

“Too old to plant trees for my own gratification, I shall do it for my posterity.”

- Thomas Jefferson

Farm Fresh Tips & Tidbits

It’s planting time! For those of us that save seed, the average seed life for common home-grown veggies and flowers is given below!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Life Expectancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bush &amp; Pole Beans</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli &amp; Cabbage</td>
<td>3 to 5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Corn</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumbers</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radishes</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower Seed (Annuals)</td>
<td>1 to 3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower Seed (Perennials)</td>
<td>2 to 4 Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Indoor Garden

• Time to Spring-clean your houseplants - keeps them beautiful and helps to ward off diseases. Remove dead or yellow leaves and branches, as well as any spent flowers. Use your kitchen sink sprayer to gently rinse the dust from leaves - clean leaves allow the plants to breathe, prevents Spider Mites, and adds humidity.

• Now that we’re getting longer days and brighter light, rotate your houseplants so the entire plant receives adequate sunlight for even growth and balanced shape.

• If you have a Coleus houseplant, you can start cuttings to transplant into your garden. Use a clean, sharp knife to cut the stem just below a leaf node; remove the lowest leaves, dip the cut end into a rooting hormone, insert it into fresh, sterile potting soil. (If you do this in April they should be ready to transplant into your outdoor garden in June.)

Remember, if you’ve only got houseplants, you can still have the gardening spirit!

“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
The Backside

“Well, Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow on Groundhog Day (2/2) which legend means six more weeks of Winter - but that doesn’t scare this ‘ol gardener. Soon my greenhouse will be teeming with a jungle of hundreds of tomato starts! You know there is so much yet so little to gardening, I’m always amazed! Even a “brown thumb” gardener can get “green”. Be sure to read the “Garden Chore Checklist” article inside this issue and try to follow it. Rotate plantings of vegetables and introduce beneficial plants to help rid your garden of pests. Water, fertilize, trim and talk to your plants to make them happy and want to grow healthy. So grab a beverage, sit down and read Garden Highlights to remind you how well you are doing, as you look over what things will become!”

(Isn’t a groundhog considered a varmint anyway?)

When the April wind wakes the call for the soil, I hold the plough as my only hold upon the earth, and, as I follow through the fresh and fragrant furrow, I am planted with every foot-step, growing, budding, blooming into a spirit of Spring.”

- Dallas Lore Sharp, 1870-1929

“Your thoughts feed Garden Highlights the way good soil feeds our gardens!”

Marty Miller—OSU Master Gardener™

Garden Highlights

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Tips, Tidbits & Humor

Garden Highlights

“For more information on articles in this issue, or on gardening in general, contact your local ‘OSU Extension Office/Master Gardener™ Program’. They have a wealth of knowledge to share!

I welcome hearing from you about Garden Highlights! Please pass along any gardening tips, jokes, stories or local events (two months in advance please) you would like to share. If you would like to be featured in ‘Reader Profile’, please write or email with your contact information. I’ll use some of your submissions in future issues of Garden Highlights. Readers who are selected will receive a free gift! Send me your pearls of wisdom!”

‘till then - Marty

“The scent of the rose remains in the hand that gives the rose!”

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Garden Highlights is published bimonthly by:

Prospect Farm Publishing (prospectfarm@hrecon.net)

Fellow Gardeners: Our gardens are resting until Spring and we’re no longer able to donate surplus produce to our local food banks. They still need our help! Please donate non-perishable items to your local food bank. Thank you!

Garden Highlights is printed on recyclable paper!