Special Supplement to the Winchester Press



A view of the Garden

May 14, 2008

The difference is in the soil!



If you think that all soil is created equal, think again! As all those avid gardeners who like to get their hands dirty know, while soil is made up of the same basic components it can actually be quite different. Comprised of air, water, inorganic material, minerals, and decomposed plant and animal material, good soil is the most important ingredient for a healthy and successful garden.

Nutrients in soil are steadily diminished as organic matter in compost and fertilizer or plant food is used by plants and eroded by the elements. It's important, therefore, to amend your soil and add nutrients regularly.

An important first step includes determining the type of soil required for your garden to achieve its maximum growth potential. Some plants grow best when soil is conditioned, because this can increase fertility, water retention, and productivity. Some types of conditioned soil include manure, compost, trench composting, peat moss, leaves, sawdust, and mulch.

In new subdivisions or developments, conditioning the existing topsoil is an essential step in establishing and maintaining healthy lawns and gardens.

Know your soil

Professionally blended soils to look for this season include:

- Black earth, great for lawns, provides a three-in-one blend of black earth, compost, and manure. The natural, organic-based ingredients help improve the soil structure by increasing porosity and allowing more water and nutrients to reach the roots.
- Topsoil is a blend of topsoil, compost, and manure, an organic-based blend of nutrients to promote healthy plant growth.
- Organic compost is designed for in-ground gardens. It's a professional quality blend of compost and manure, containing essential organic matter from composted leaves and yard clippings. Add it to flower and vegetable beds for healthier plant growth and more abundant vegetables and blooms.
- Containers require a different type of soil altogether. Since container-bound plants tend to dry out faster; choose a container planting soil with a mixture of sphagnum peat, bark fines, compost, and perlite to help soil hold moisture, promote strong root growth and better drainage for container gardens. Pro Blends Potting Mix is also enriched with a slow release fertilizer for healthier plant growth. Miracle-Gro Potting Mix contains coconut fibre husks, which hold moisture until the plant needs it.

Get the scoop before buying soil blends by reading labels and choosing the appropriate one for your needs.

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A growing passion

Above: *Jane Hendrikx of Meadow Greens Nursery, just north of Marionville, reported that people were lined up at the gate for their first official day of the new season on Sat., April 26. Her husband, Tony, reported that many people rush in during the first few days to reserve hanging baskets that can be picked up in warmer weather.*

Right: *Barbara Testerink of Glen Becker Nursery and Garden Shop, south of Williamsburg, is presenting a new plant to her customers this season. She is holding a few pots of Diamond Frost Euphorbia, which she said adds extra dimension to planters and hanging baskets, as Baby's Breath does for flower bouquets. Photos — Barbour*



Left: *Andy Brunner of A.B. Greenhouse, north of Chesterville, said he usually brings in several new plant and garden accessories each year. He reported that the most popular items this season are planters made with coconut shells in a rustic design. Photo — Barbour*

Cut mower emissions

The cordless electric mower works as effectively as a traditional gas model — but without the air-polluting emissions. Support from the Ontario government will help in developing this next generation lawnmower in Guelph, Ont.

Linamar Corporation, an auto parts manufacturer, launched its new cordless lawnmower this spring. The lawnmower lasts up to an hour on a single charge — more than 10 times longer than the average cordless electric lawnmower. The technology can also be used in snowblowers and other gas-powered small equipment.

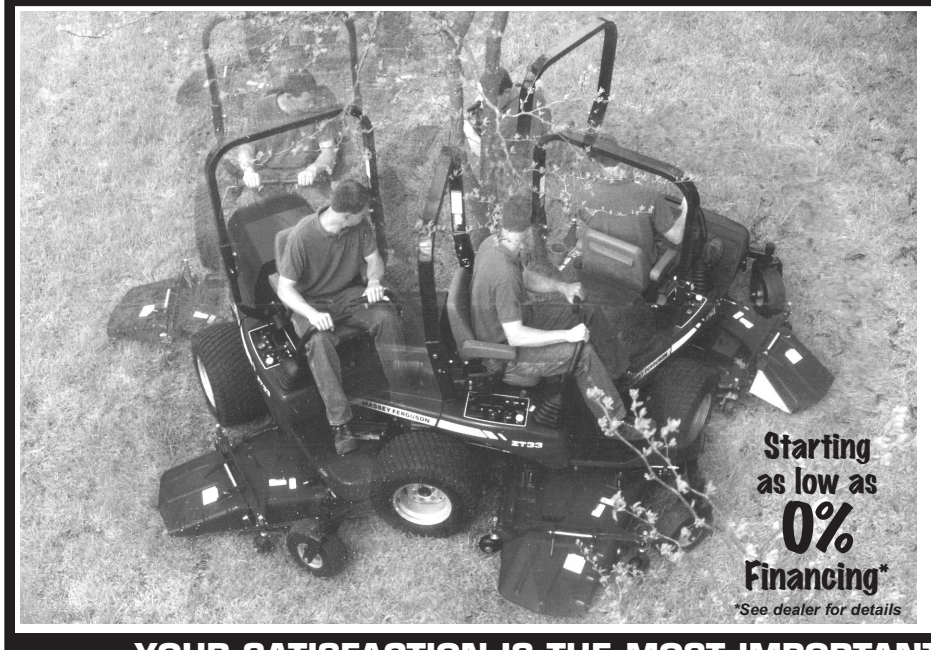
"We're thrilled with the support we have received from the Ontario government as well as the enthusiasm we're seeing in the market for our 'green' lawnmowers," said Linda Hasenfratz, CEO of Linamar Corporation. "We are great believers in tapping into the exciting market of green technologies consumers are looking for, and because we offer the option of using a solar charger for the battery, Ontarians can take green to a whole new level."

Ontario's $1.8 million investment comes from the Innovation Demonstration Fund, which supports promising environmental and alternative energy technologies.

"The demand for clean technologies is growing globally," said John Wilkinson, minister of research and innovation. "Our investment will help bring an innovative Ontario product to markets around the world."

According to Statistics Canada, gas-powered lawn equipment releases about 80,000 tonnes of emissions in Canada every year, using 151 million litres of gas. The average cordless electric lawnmower lasts about five minutes on a single charge, and re-charging the battery can take several hours. Developers will be working on improving the technology in Guelph, where MPP Liz Sandals exalts the local innovation.

"This project shows how innovation can lead to a greener Ontario," she said. "I am proud that this innovative lawnmower is being produced right here in Guelph."



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A fountain or a water garden, that's the question

Water plays a relaxing as well as an aesthetic role in any garden. Although water can be featured in different ways in the landscape, this natural element usually comes in the form of a water garden or a fountain.

As improvisation could be very expensive, a water garden requires detailed planning. Among the rules to be respected, all the following must be considered: the depth of the pond, its dimensions, shape, material to be used, as well as the choice of plants and the quality of the earth. Moreover, if the garden design is already complete, the installation of a water feature requires even more meticulous thought. Some vegetation will probably have to be moved and even some paths. All the work must be carried out with an eye for detail favouring a harmonious integration.

Of course, it isn't necessary to complete everything the first year. You can start with a small project which can evolve over the years. In this way, it will be possible to add another pond which could flow into the first one, to design a waterfall or a stream, or to add more diversified vegetation to blossom all around the water garden. However, remember to surround the edge of the pond with river pebbles to prevent the growth of weeds.

The design requires a little less planning if you would rather opt for a fountain. You just need to choose the site, taking into account the fountain's dimensions and its harmonization with the existing garden. Some types of cascading fountains can become an integral part of a water garden.



A pretty, cascading fountain that can be introduced alone or in a water garden.

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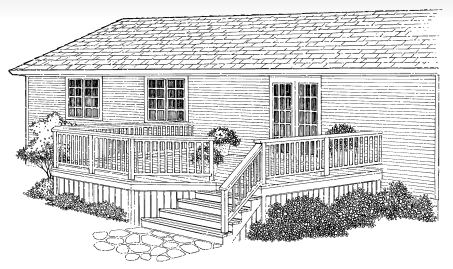

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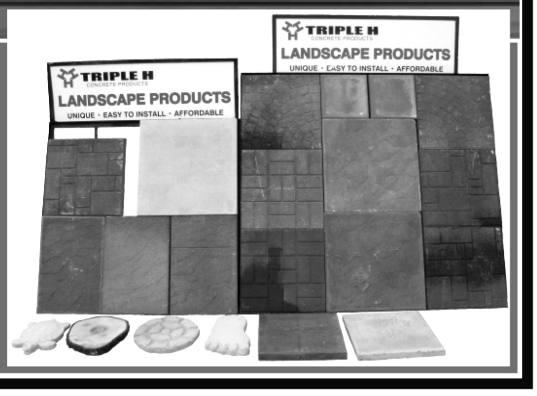

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Cultivation query? Ask a Master Gardener

Local organization to share tips and tricks through advice clinics, column

by Meghan Duncan
Press staff

Have a gardening question? Don't know who to ask? Turn to the United Counties Master Gardeners.

The group is launching an "Ask a Master Gardener" column, which will feature real answers to real questions and be printed in the *Press* this summer.

The United Counties Master Gardeners currently has eight members — from Cornwall, Mountain, Morewood, Metcalfe, Russell, and Winchester. The local group was formed in 2003, but the Master Gardeners umbrella organization dates back to the early 1970s.

Through university correspondence courses in horticulture, all members are certified "Master Gardeners."

"I think we're a pretty varied group," said Barbara Baker, noting that the members all received their certification for various reasons, and specialize in a variety of aspects of the industry, from perennials to annuals to shrubs to vegetables and fruits to house plants.

"When it comes to perennials, I have to ask the others," admitted Barbara Summers, who said she is more of an expert when it comes to organic gardening, trees, and grass.

They both agreed that belonging to the organization "is an ongoing learning experience."

"Everything we do is for learning purposes," Summers said.

"There's the education part of it, but there's also the fun part of it," Baker pointed out, noting that no one in the group is pursuing a PhD in horticulture. "We take a very common-sense approach. The education simply puts everyone on the same level."

The group is also varied when it comes to lifestyle, whether members are retired or working full-time in various fields.

They meet six times a year and each member is in charge of researching a topic and presenting the information. The group is actively seeking more members, and would like to ensure that every corner of the United Counties is covered.

Summers explained the Master Gardeners' goal is to share as much information as possible with the public. Members will offer up their expertise and knowledge at various trade shows and locations throughout the summer months, including the South Dundas Chamber of Commerce Spring Home and Trade Show this weekend (Fri., May 16 from 5 to 9 pm and Sat., May 17 from 9 am to 5 pm); the Russell and District Horticulture Society Plant Sale (May 17); the Finch Plant Sale (May 24); Winchester Home Hardware (May 24 and May 31); and at the Metcalfe Farmers' Market (June 7, 14, and 21).

If you would like to ask a question through the upcoming advice column, e-mail it to barbara@ripnet.com, or call Barbara Baker at 613-989-1556. While the expert responding to the question will be identifiable — a different Master Gardener for each column — those asking the questions may remain anonymous.



Ask a Master Gardener

United Counties Master Gardeners Fred Deschamps (back,left), Frieda Deschamps, Patricia Stachon, Mark Daniher, Lindley McPhail (front, left), Mary Rowsell, Barbara Summers, and Barbara Baker will answer your gardening questions in the "Ask a Master Gardener" column, to appear in every second edition of the Press *during the summer. Got a question? E-mail barbara@ripnet.com. Photo — Barbour*

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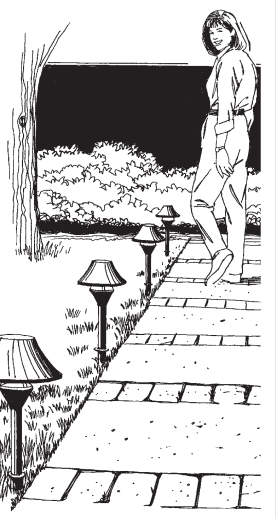

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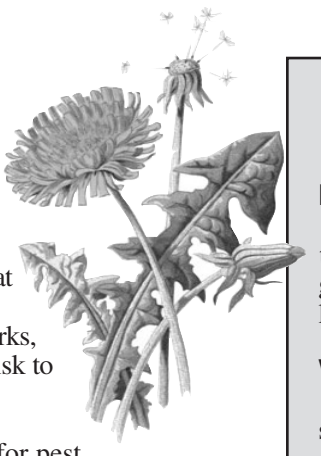


by Sarah Kelford, Press staff

Residents of Ontario should take time to enjoy their perfectly primped yard this summer because if Premier Dalton McGuinty's plan goes as he hopes, by next spring Ontario's lawns will be pesticide-free, and dandelion-clad.

McGuinty marked Earth Day, April 22, with the announcement of the potential cosmetic pesticide ban. If given the Ontario legislature's nod of approval, the ban will be implemented next spring.

Agricultural land, forestry areas, and golf courses will be exempt from this ban as the government has already placed strict pesticide conditions on these business sectors.

"Forty-four per cent of Ontario municipalities already have a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides, but North Dundas is not one of them, so this will be new to our ratepayers," said North Dundas councillor Eric Duncan. "Since the ban does not apply to farmers, many in our community will not be affected as they are from or around agricultural property, and they are exempted."

Although many Ontarians are opposed to the pesticide ban, the government continues to reassure residents that this ban is in their best interest.

"Our generation is becoming more and more aware of the potential risks in our environment, not only to our health, but to our children's health," McGuinty said in a press release. "That's why we're taking action on behalf of the next generation of Ontarians, and reducing their exposure to chemicals."

Duncan noted that he is pleased to see the issue being dealt with at the provincial level.

"It doesn't make sense, or do much good, if one municipality has a ban, yet next door, another one has no bylaw in place," he said. "I'm glad that the Ontario legislature is having the debate, as their decision will have more of an effect."

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment released a statement that said the use of pesticides to improve the appearance of lawns, gardens, parks, and school yards is an unnecessary risk to children, pets, and the water supply.

The ministry is also educating Ontarians about green alternatives for pest and weed management and encouraging people to look into the hundreds of Ontario businesses and organizations that promote and carry environmentally friendly, natural alternatives.

Many local companies already carry green alternatives like compost fertilizers. With nutrient-rich fertilizer and a healthy soil, lawns become more weed resistant.

"The federal government has also taken initiative in reducing chemicals that are affecting the health of Canadians," said SD&G MP Guy Lauzon, noting the recent action taken against bisphenol A, a chemical used in many food containers and child care products, namely baby bottles. "We are always working to reduce the environmental impact of many of the products we use every day in our homes and workplaces."

Lauzon also explained a few of the government's initiatives including the introduction and establishment of concentration limits on a variety of consumer, personal care, surface cleaners, and coatings.

"These new regulations, which will be among the toughest standards available, are another example of our government's continued commitment to protect the environment and Canadian consumers," he said.

How to have a beautiful, chemical-free lawn

Mow high

Long grass not only shades its roots to keep them cool but it gives weeds a harder time to grow. Two inches is the minimum recommended length for healthy grass, three inches is best.

Water deeply and seldom

Regular light sprinkling of lawns encourages shallow, weak roots. It is recommended to water grass once a week. Bluegrass lawns need about one inch of water weekly, while fescues and perennial ryegrasses only need about half an inch.

Mulch clippings

When mowing, it is suggested that no more than one-third of the leaf-length is removed at a time. Leave the clippings in the grass as this reduces the need for fertilizer by 30 per cent.

Aerate and overseed

Grass roots need to breathe to grow strong. Rent an aerator, or hire a lawn-care business to aerate your lawn in June when there are the fewest weed seeds blowing around. After aeration, rake the lawn, overseed, and water.

Fertilize in the fall

It is recommended to use a slow-release granular fertilizer once a year, but be sure not to over-fertilize as that can actually weaken the grass. Organic fertilizers last the whole year and prevent weak green-growth that bugs love to eat.



Ornamental trees

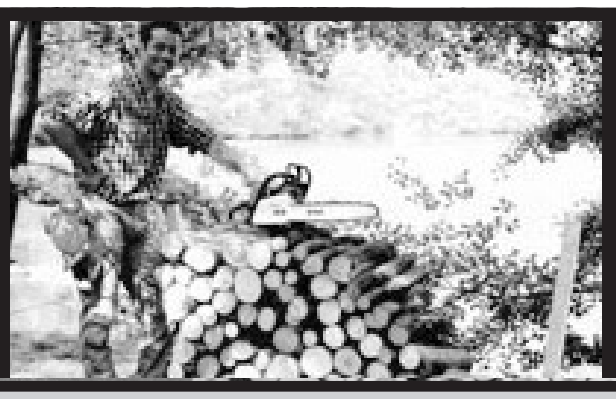
Trees are much more than just a decoration: they are our bond with nature, they are our oxygen, they are always admired and they create a feeling of security.

Placed with care in a garden, trees are also a good way of saving energy. Conifers, planted near the north and west walls of a house, will protect it from cold winter winds. Broad-leaved trees, planted on the south and east walls of a house, will protect it from the hot rays of the summer sun.

Every tree has its own unique charm and is chosen for very personal reasons. The paper birch is one of the most popular trees because it is so decorative. It can give little shade, but a group of three or four birches blends in well where there are lots of conifers. The paper birch has the advantage of being very resistant to frost and drought, as well as needing very little maintenance.

The oak is also a very beautiful, ornamental tree. It grows slowly and is practically indestructible. It also provides a lot of shade. The oak is not recommended for small gardens, but it can be planted near to a building as its roots grow deep and vertical.

The American white ash grows very quickly and is appreciated for the shade it affords and for its ornamental appearance. Because of its deep root system, the ash tolerates flooding well and is, therefore, ideal for damp ground. For those people who don't like picking up leaves in the fall, this tree is perfect as its leaves disintegrate in the grass, thus making the task of raking rather pointless.





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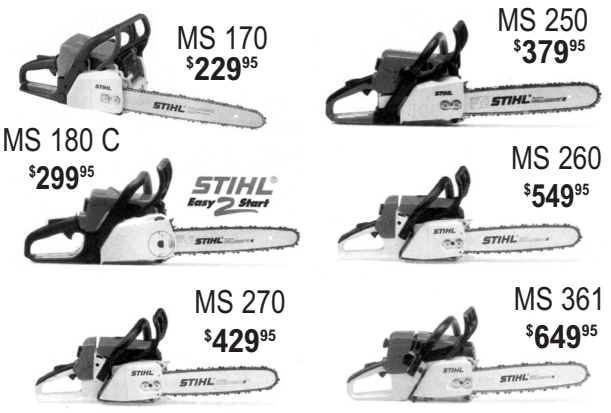

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ZTR mowers on cutting edge of technology

by Matthew Barbour

In the past few years, zero turn radius (ZTR) mowers have been gaining in popularity. These are the machines that most landscaping companies use and can literally turn on a dime and, in the hands of a skilled driver, look like they are performing a waltz across the lawn.

For some, cutting grass is a pleasure, but for many, it is looked upon as nothing more than a chore — something to be finished quickly so they can enjoy other pursuits.

People who have a lot of grass to cut generally believe that a riding mower is "the only way to go." Until a few years ago, the only choice in riding mowers was the common lawn tractor, a miniature version of the farm tractor, but now there is the ZTR option.

The ZTRs that professionals use can be fairly pricey, but almost every lawn mower manufacturing company now makes at least two ZTR models for the consumer.

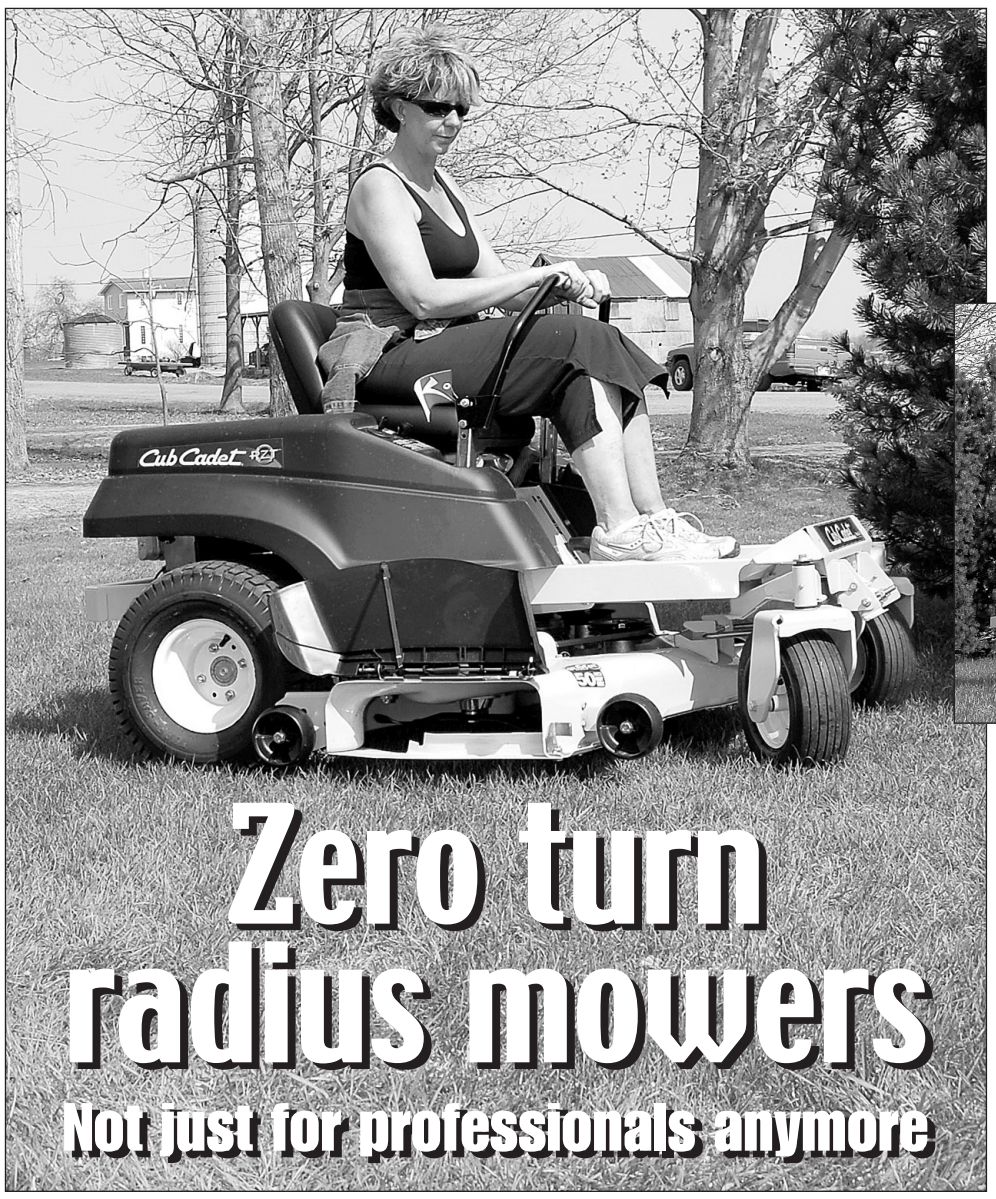
"The professional models are built to operate for 40 hours a week, but the average homeowner uses his mower for 50 or 60 hours in a year, so consumer models need not be built to the same rugged specifications," said Carl Berends of B&B Small Engines in Hallville. "For example, the air cleaner on a consumer model is very small compared to the professional model."

Berends, who sells the Cub Cadet line, reported that almost half the mowers he sells now are ZTRs.

"They cost about (one) thousand dollars more than lawn tractors, but cut down on mowing time by at least 30 per cent — maybe as much as 50 per cent, depending on how many trees you have to go around," said Berends.

He added that the time-saving factor and the ease of operation seems to be what attracts most buyers.

"There is no changing gears and going back and forth to cut around a tree — it's just one easy motion with these machines," he explained. "And people are surprised to find out how quickly they learn to drive them."



Left: *Lori Norris of Hallville drove a zero turn radius mower for the very first time on Sat., April 26. She stopped at B&B Small Engines on Kerr's Ridge Road during the business's open house and tested out the ZTR.*
Below: *Tim Dudley of Hallville is shopping for a new lawn mower and also tried out some of the demonstrator models at B&B Small Engines.*
Photos — Barbour



As one might expect, the principal difference with ZTRs is in the steering. Some ZTRs still have separate axles — one for steering and another for the drive wheels. But on the type most popular with consumers and professionals alike, steering is accomplished by controlling the power delivered to the drive wheels, which operate independently of each other. Additional wheels that support the machine swivel freely. Thus, it is possible to have one power wheel moving forward as the other power wheel travels in reverse, resulting in a zero turn radius.

Like most dealers who specialize in small equipment, Berends services the machines he sells and allows prospective customers to try out his demonstrator models.

"I hate to deliver something and find out later that people aren't happy with it — let's find out before they buy it," he said.

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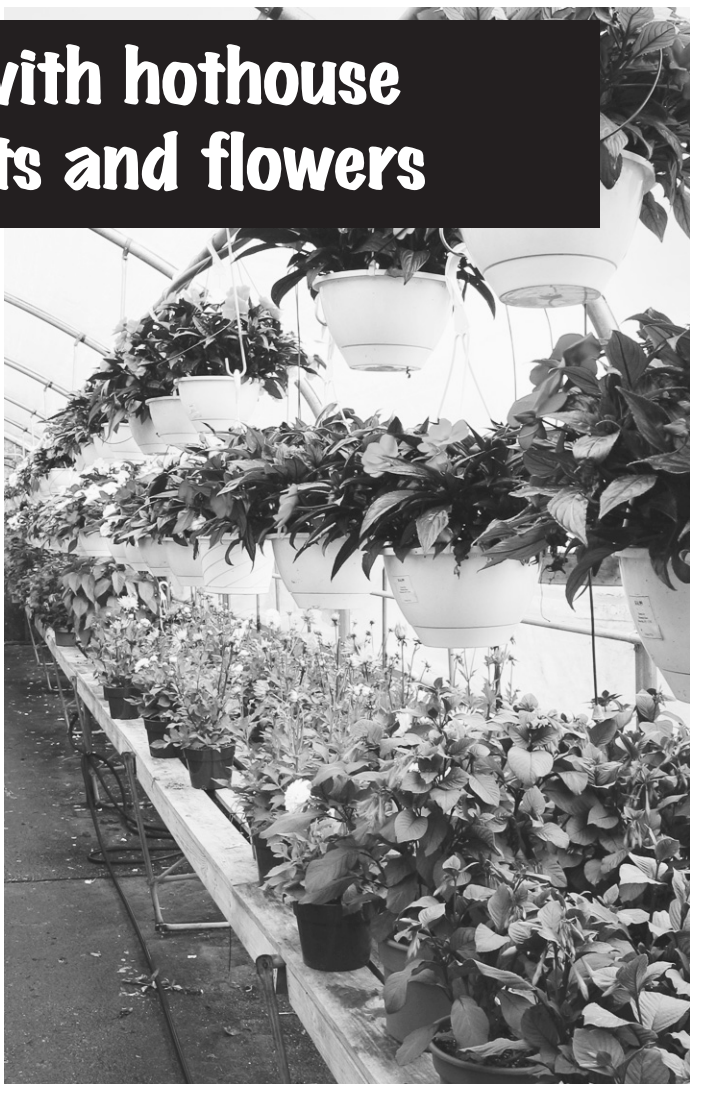



Sitting pretty

Rejuvenate outdoor furniture with a touch of paint

Spring is here and it's time to make your outdoor living space as inspiring as indoors. A beautiful garden adds another 'room' where you can enjoy the season in all its glory.

Start your makeover by giving a lift to weathered outdoor furniture. Let the palette of your flower beds inspire you and paint chairs to contrast or complement the focal point.

According to the experts at Rust-Oleum, the options for giving your chairs flower-power are endless:

• Dingy plastic chairs can be brought back to life with paint specially formulated for plastic. There is a multitude of colours to choose from that will give a rich glossy finish in one easy application – no priming required.

• Bring the cafés of Italy to your own backyard by adding classic finishes like Tremclad's textured bronze to your cast iron patio table and chairs.

• Remember that old wooden bench that's been left forgotten in the corner of the yard? A pastel shade and a new location can take it from trashy to tranquil and offer a great new refuge for reading and relaxation. Try Painter's Touch meadow green or blue sky paint.

• That old Muskoka chair still has some life in it yet. Tighten the screws and give it a quick sand. Finish with a bold new coat of paint, accessorize with indoor/outdoor throw pillows and in no time at all you've got the perfect perch for a warm afternoon.

• And don't forget the wicker chairs – they too can be spruced up for the season with some TLC and some well chosen paint.

• If 'wild' is your style, try polka dots, geometrics or paint-splatter. Pattern is back – and so is colour – so make a splash in your garden this year.

More inspiration can be found online at paintideas.com.

- News Canada



Be smart when you barbecue

Have fun barbecuing this season, but keep safety in mind by following a few simple tips:

• Make sure your grill is far away from the house and shrubs. The heat alone can be hot enough to melt or warp siding, not to mention spreading an actual fire.

• An adult should watch the grill at all times. Unattended grills are more susceptible to spread fire or cause injury. A wind-blown paper plate or napkin can quickly ignite, and children can bump into the scorching barbecue.

• Do some research and cook food properly to prevent illness from bacteria or under-cooked meat.

Remember, these tips are only general guidelines. Since each situation is different, contact a professional if you have questions about a specific issue. More home maintenance information is available online at www.housemaster.com.

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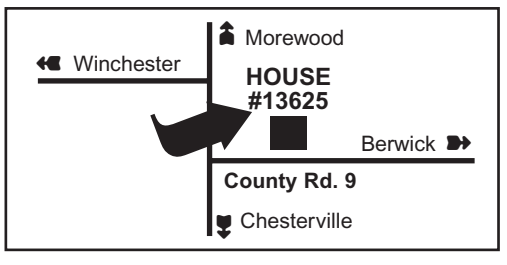



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House of Lazarus Food Bank co-ordinator Kim Merkley (left), sorting room supervisor Joyce Lamonte, volunteer Jean Dillabaugh, and administrative assistant Elaine Mador got down and dirty in the community garden at the House of Lazarus in Mountain. Bill and Deborah Workman of Mountain will be looking after the garden, which will feature all kinds of vegetables to be distributed to the mission's clients. Press Photo — Duncan

Here we grow again

House of Lazarus plants fourth annual community garden

For the fourth year in a row, the House of Lazarus outreach mission is planting a community garden on its Simms Street property in Mountain.

"People are not getting enough fresh fruit and vegetables," said House of Lazarus executive director Pauline Pratt. "This is a way we can get nutritious vegetables to our clients, who need them the most."

The garden will feature tomatoes, carrots, turnips, zucchini, cucumbers, lettuce, onions, peas, and beans.

"We can demonstrate that it's easy to have a garden," Pratt explained, noting that the project also allows the mission to share how to prepare the fresh food, and instills nutritious eating values in its clients, who help to harvest the produce, and often bring their children for the learning experience.

"It's kind of a beacon that shows hope," Pratt said of the plot of land. "People look forward to it going in."

The garden has been tilled once and planting will be underway by the time readers receive this supplement.

Mountain residents Bill and Deborah Workman will be looking after the garden.

"Thank you to the community for all the support," Pratt said, noting that many people have dropped off seeds for use in the garden, making it truly a community garden.

Stone mound adds to garden, and recipes

Ever wonder what to do with the rocks you turn over in your garden? Why not build a stone-strewn Mediterranean mound, featuring culinary herbs from that region?

Some plants thrive in rocky soil. These include many culinary herbs that are native to the Mediterranean, where the soil tends to be stony. Lavender, marjoram, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, and thyme, for example, prefer stony settings. Their ideal bed would be a stone-strewn Mediterranean mound that enables plants to send down deep roots to absorb water while keeping their crowns high and dry.

To build a Mediterranean mound, mark off and excavate the area for your new garden bed, setting the soil aside. Remove four to five inches of soil in a 12-inch-wide path around the perimeter. Dig down one foot below the level of the path.

Amend the excavated soil by mixing in a wheelbarrow-full each of grit, rock rubble, and compost. Return the soil to the bed, shaping it into a mound. To add interest, place a few large rocks on the mound.

Plant herbs, along with a selection of other Mediterranean plants, putting those that will grow tallest and require good drainage high on the mound and setting low growers that tolerate more moisture lower.

Mulch between the plants and around the bed with gravel or organic matter, such as wood chips.

Lay the path around the bed with permeable landscaping fabric (to prevent weeds) and several inches of coarse gravel to allow rainwater to penetrate and provide deep-water reserves for the plants.

The preceding is an excerpt from the 2008 edition of The Old Farmer's Almanac All-Seasons Garden Guide, *on sale wherever books and magazines are sold.*

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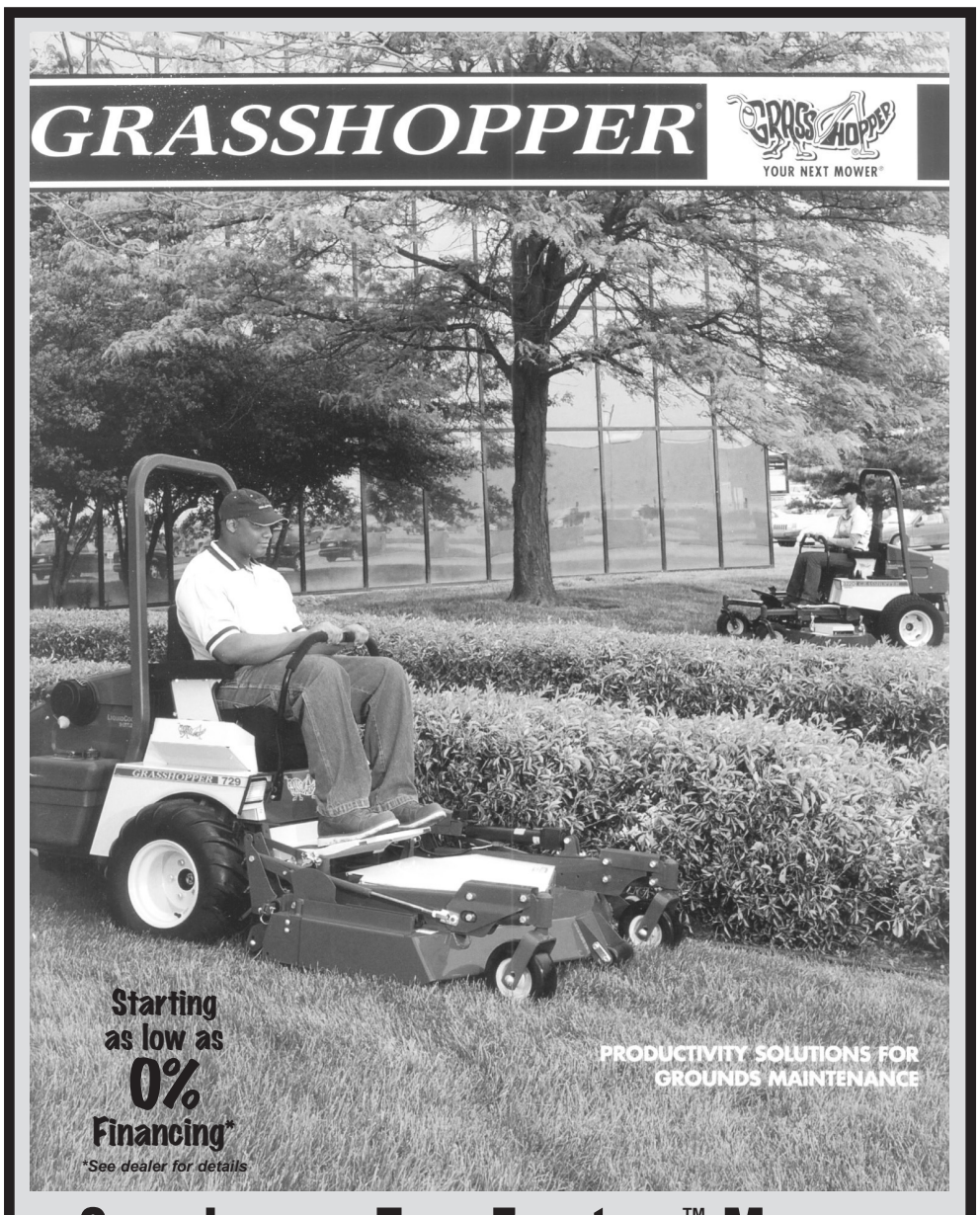

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Seeds to Everest mission spreads joy of gardening

by Meghan Duncan
Press staff

"I truly believe that if everybody did some kind of gardening, if it was mandatory, this world would be a better place," said Jeff Arsenault, founder of the Morrisburg-based Garden Foundation.

The educational assistant at Winchester Public School is responsible for launching the Seeds to Everest initiative, in which students from Las Vegas and New York City are now participating after hearing about the project on the Web.

A total of 5,000 sunflower seeds are on their way to the top of Mount Everest with climbers participating in an International Mountain Guides expedition. The climbers, and the seeds, are expected to hit the peak at the end of May. Students at WPS are receiving regular e-mails and reports on the progress of the climb — and the seeds.

A special portion of the seeds will be sent to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) to let patients in on the fun, as well.

Arsenault launched Seeds to Everest as a way to inspire a love of gardening amongst the students.

The idea is to send the seeds to the top of the mountain then redistribute them to elementary students across North America to grow over the summer months. Students will be asked to report back on any changes in the sunflower plants resulting from the exposure of the seeds to high altitudes.

"I'm doing this to spread the message that gardening really is cool," Arsenault said. He wants students to grow the sunflowers and in turn pass on seeds from those plants to other students, turning them on to the joys of gardening as well.

"Gardening creates a peace of mind," he explained. "It creates conscientiousness about life — a wisdom and ability to see things grow, live and die. Nowadays a lot of people are on a treadmill because things are going too quickly. Gardening is a tool for slowing things down. It creates patience, a sense of endurance, and a wonder at seeing what you have helped nurture."

Arsenault has contacted Guinness World Records and will submit the project for world record consideration for "the most seeds to the top of Everest."

The Garden Foundation distributes gardening supplies to elementary schools across Canada — including to the Northwest Territories, where the climate and lack of earthworms create a much different gardening landscape.



Jeff Arsenault of Morrisburg founded the Garden Foundation in 1995 and, as an educational assistant at Winchester Public School, is working to get children interested in gardening. *Press Photo — Duncan*

"We need to educate kids about the benefits of gardening," Arsenault explained, noting that gardening teaches children about life and death, and about respect and nurturing. "That seed is not going to develop unless you care for it, unless you show it compassion. It teaches values that they can apply to all aspects of their lives."

Arsenault noted that he has no formal training when it comes to horticulture.

"I really believe that if I'm going to teach someone, I have to show them it's easy," he explained, adding that if he can do it, anyone can. "I've learned everything I know about gardening the hard way."

He has worked with the Canadian Space Agency in the past to send seeds into space.

"They took the idea and sent tomato seeds into space," he explained, though he wasn't credited for the idea. "I didn't care about the recognition, as long as it got kids involved in gardening." Which, he said, is the ultimate goal of the Foundation.

"The (vegetable) gardening industry is dying — it's really, really scarce," he said, noting that generally speaking, people no longer grow their own produce in a backyard veggie patch. "It's more handy to go to the store."

The McKenzie Seed Company and Kord sponsor the Foundation and supply the pots, seeds, and other gardening supplies for distribution.

"If it wasn't for these sponsors, none of this would take place," he said.

The Foundation's website is in the works, and its logo can be found on several garden-oriented products.

"That shows people that the company (whose products on which the logo appears) has lent a hand in promoting gardening," Arsenault said. "It shows that they're willing to go the extra mile, that their products are kid-approved and these products have been given to schools."

The Foundation's logo also appears on the 2008 Wyman and Son gardening calendar, which is available at garden centres, including Home Hardware.

"I can get really emotional when it comes to gardening," Arsenault said. "It's helped me so much."

Arsenault launched the foundation in 1995 following his daughter's death.

"Gardening brings everything back into perspective," he said. "If you're angry, you can take it out on the soil; if you're sad, you can meditate in your garden; and it makes you happy to see the progress."

Gardening all comes down to quality, Arsenault said. For success one needs good soil, good seeds, and a good location.

His personal garden in Morrisburg has been the site of many special moments — from Alzheimer's or cancer patients sitting and enjoying the tranquility to young couples having photos taken (on prom night or their wedding day).

"I've had students I've taught over the years come and use the garden for graduation photos," Arsenault said.

Arsenault plans to rebuild the gazebo and other structures in his garden to ensure they are safe for visitors, and revamp his flowerbeds this season.

Arsenault is the first to admit that when he launched the Garden Foundation, he was full of enthusiasm, "but I put my energy into things that weren't important," he said.

He has appeared on the Dini Petty Show, and the Foundation was featured in an article in *Chatelaine* magazine's garden issue. He appeared on several television and news shows through satellite feeds, and was featured on CJOH's *Regional Contact.*

Now, after 13 years, Arsenault said he focuses on the most important thing — the kids.

He has spent 19 years working with high-needs students at Iroquois, Morrisburg, and now Winchester Public School, and noted that gardening is a great teaching tool to connect with students.

"This is the best school I've worked in," Arsenault said about WPS, "and has to be one of the best in the board."

If anyone is interested in planting a sunflower seed that has been to the top of Mount Everest and back, they may contact Arsenault at Winchester Public School – 613-774-2607 – or email him at jeff.arsenault@ucdsb.on.ca.

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Garden centre a haven for greenthumbs

by Sarah Kelford
Press staff

From flowers to shrubs and arbours to ornaments, Winchester Home Hardware's garden centre has what any greenthumb needs for this gardening season.

"Gardening is so huge," said Fay Gallinger, manager of the garden centre. "There is so much to it, it's not just planting flowers anymore."

"It's outdoor living," added owner Ken Boje.

Boje explained that this year's gardening season is a little later than previous years due to the extreme winter.

"We are open," Boje assured, adding that more shrubs, flowers, and hanging baskets are on the way.

Gallinger said that by mid-May all the supplies and plants will be in the garden centre and ready for planting.

"The past two or three weeks have been extremely busy in the garden centre," said Gallinger. "It went immediately from winter to summer and people want to start their gardens."

Gallinger, who has been gardening most of her life and learned techniques from practical experience, is on hand at the garden centre to offer gardening tips and ideas to customers.

"I do tons of reading," said Gallinger, adding that she recommends people read gardening magazines and books to get ideas and try new things. "Knowledge is a wonderful thing."

Gallinger has managed the garden centre for the past couple years and said that she tries to switch plants year to year for variety and listen to what people say they would like to have in their gardens, whether it's different flowers, shrubs, furniture, or ponds.

"There is everything (at Winchester Home Hardware) for an outdoor space. We have patio furniture, gazebos, arbours, trellises, flowers, shrubs, just tons of stuff," she said. "People love being outdoors."



Fay Gallinger, manager of the Winchester Home Hardware garden centre, stands in front of some of the flowers available. The garden centre is open with lots of plants for the garden and ideas for outdoor living.

Aquatic garden dreams

"Water gardening" has become very popular in the past couple years and Winchester Home Hardware has taken to the trend, offering many aquatic options in their garden centre.

"People really love it," said Gallinger of water gardening. "We have liners, pumps, filters, lilies, koi food, pretty much everything you need for a water pond."

Water gardens, or garden ponds are a man-made feature combining a pond with aquatic plants, fountains, and often fish.

Winchester Home Hardware offers the essential supplies to start a water garden, and the materials needed to give the garden its finished look.

"There are landscaping rocks, fountains, ornaments, statues, lots of water plants," said Gallinger. "A lot of people also like the solar lights, or solar globes that float in the pond."

Gallinger added that water gardening is "becoming really big," and the employees at Winchester Home Hardware are always there to help anyone get started or give new ideas for their water garden.

It's good to be in the shade

At the height of the summer, there's nothing better than retreating to a nice, shady corner of the garden. If you have a tree, tall and wide enough, it would be so easy to install two or three comfortable chairs in its shade to spend some relaxing moments during the hot afternoons. But if this isn't the case, you'll have to create your own shaded area.

The most popular garden shelter by far is the arbour. It's enough to plant some climbing roses, vines, jasmine, honeysuckle, etc. Clematis is particularly appreciated as it grows quickly and provides light shade. For denser shade, ivy is the best bet with its dense foliage.

If you would like a garden shelter providing protection against both sun and rain but without going as far as building a gazebo, you can always install a canvas cover over the arbour. However, by cutting out wind and water, this solution would perhaps make your arbour hotter. And, if you want to leave plants permanently inside the arbour, it would be very difficult for them to survive, not having access to rain water or sunshine. In an arbour which has a roof made mostly of light foliage, ferns and begonias will flourish.

In the case of a garden shelter built in a shady area, it can be covered with fibreglass panels which would allow a welcome light to filter through while protecting the occupants from the rain.

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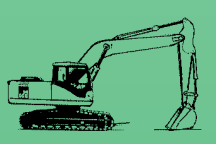
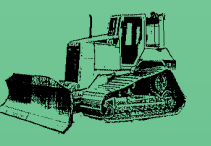
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Contrasting foliages can give some good results. Here's a beautiful example.

Conserve the beauty of your flower boxes

For gardeners, the presence of flower boxes hanging from the windows is a source of pleasure that is constantly renewed throughout the summer months. You can play with colour harmonies or contrasting plants and even dare to introduce some vegetables. And why not? After all, flower boxes offer you a marvellous opportunity to add a touch of originality to the garden. What's more, if you're not happy with the results, you can easily change the chosen arrangements without it costing a fortune.

For this type of gardening to succeed and to ensure that the plants stay healthy, you always have to think about watering, feeding, treating, and pruning. These are the keys to success. For example, it is important to deadhead faded flowers regularly to achieve prolonged and abundant flowering.

Do you realize that during heat waves, your plants may need to be watered as often as twice a day? As well, if you have to go away for a few days, rely on a friend or neighbour to do the watering for you. Remember also, that plants in containers need to be fed on a regular basis. Fertilize them with a plant food once a week. Or, at the beginning of the summer, add a slow dissolving fertilizer that has the advantage of feeding the plants over several weeks.

Indoor gardens give flowers a headstart

Indoor planting is a great way to beat the winter blahs and can also extend the growing season. Many gardeners start seeds indoors in late March to get a head start on their garden.

To help you get your garden growing early, here are a few tips courtesy of the Ontario Real Estate Association:

Start with a trip to your local garden centre for seeds and plant them according to the package directions for germination time, planting depth, spacing, and transplanting information. The easiest and most popular flowers to plant indoors include petunias, lobelia, marigolds, snapdragons, and coleus.

Sow the seeds in a good quality starting mix that has been sterilized. It's not a good idea to use soil from your garden because there is a possibility of introducing insects or disease to the seeds and the seedling plants. Seeds can be planted in a flat, tray, pot, egg carton, or peat pot as long as it has proper drainage. Be sure to thoroughly clean the containers before use.

Once in the soil, seeds started indoors have the same basic requirements as outdoor seedlings — nutrients, water, and light. However, indoor seedlings need a little more attention to artificially maintain an ideal growing environment. Once the seeds have been planted at the proper depth, moisten the soil with a light spray and keep them continually moist until they have germinated. Once germination takes place, simply water the plants as needed.

Lots of light

To grow properly, your seedlings will need a lot of light. When seedlings receive insufficient light they become tall and spindly or "leggy." Even if you have a window that receives full sun, you might need to supplement it with artificial light. Because it would be all but impossible to recreate the intensity of direct sunlight, you'll need much longer growing days to compensate. Use bulbs that are specifically made for growing plants and place them just a foot or so above your seedlings. You'll want to keep these lights on at least 14 hours a day. Fluorescent tubes are ideal because they won't produce as much heat which can quickly dry out your seedlings.

Finally, your indoor garden will need good air circulation and a temperature that ranges between 18C to 21C (65F to 70F). If they outgrow your flats or small pots you might try thinning them and transplanting the largest to bigger pots, but for the most part you want to plant them outside just as they become large enough to survive transplanting. This is generally four to six weeks after sowing, when they have at least two sets of true leaves.

Planting an indoor garden of seedlings is a relatively easy, fun, and rewarding project. To ensure your garden's success, check with the experts at your local garden center or a consult good gardening book for more tips.

This article is provided by the Ontario Real Estate Association for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Everything old is new again

Every spring, outdoor décor ends up at the curb in what has become an annual ritual of tossing out what didn't make it through winter.

Why not help keep items out of the landfill by transforming would-be trash into things of beauty?

"You may be surprised by what can be restored and beautified with a little paint and TLC," says Jane Lavin, spokesperson for Tremclad Rust Paint. "Rusting metal, stained plastic and even terra cotta can be made better than new."

Lavin offers some simple ideas for projects that will help spruce up your backyard:

- Get another year out of your weather-beaten barbecue with a rust-preventive high heat enamel that provides a deep colour and a rich sheen.
- Revitalize that old mailbox. You'll be surprised by how much it adds to the curb appeal of your house. Try Tremclad's leather brown or spring green paint.
- Brighten up your weary terra cotta pots. Start with a can of white primer, then top with a vibrant colour like grape or wild raspberry.
- Sprout something beautiful with a watering can makeover in glacier blue and water your plants with style.
- Got an old metal gate? Transform it into a rose trellis. Prepare the metal, then finish with fire red paint. Plant roses and enjoy your trellis for years to come.
- Pretty up that old wooden picnic table with a quart of regal red.

"Turn your trash into treasures," says Lavin. "You'll have a little fun and do something good for the environment."

More inspiration can be found online at paintideas.com.

- News Canada

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A natural looking rockery always adds a beautiful touch to your garden.

Tricks for a beautiful rockery

The biggest challenge when creating a rockery is to give it a natural look. If you don't have the financial resources to give this job to a professional, at least take the time to ask for some advice from a recognized landscape gardener. Too often, unfortunately, many rockeries look more like a pile of rocks or a heap of flowering stones.

A successful rockery must above all give the impression of being an integral part of the entire garden. It is, therefore, important to choose the site well. And herein lays the importance of consulting a professional, which is always a good investment.

The rockery should always finish backed up to a fixed point such as a building, a wall or a hedge.

If possible, choose stones that are found in the surrounding environment. Avoid using too many different types of stones and combining them in your rockery which would be rather hard on the eye.

As for colours of flowers, opt for the quieter tones. Dwarf conifers also help to create a natural-looking rockery.

Lastly, mat-forming perennials and annuals will cascade beautifully over the stones. This again will give your project a natural look which must always be the primary objective.

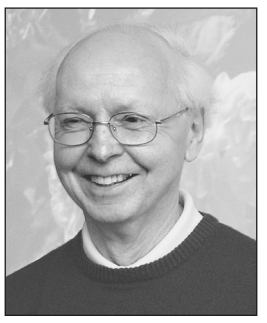
Everything's coming up roses

Master gardeners host hybrid rose seminar

by Matthew Barbour

Rose enthusiasts experienced a rare treat at a special United Counties Master Gardeners presentation in Morrisburg on Sat., April 5.

The Master Gardeners hosted a seminar that featured well known rose breeder Dr. Neville Arnold, who shared intricate details of the propagation process he uses to develop new lines. For the most part, his talk was aimed at dedicated rose breeders, but he also gave some insight into fertilization and disease control.



Dr. Neville Arnold recently spoke about the propagation process he uses to develop new lines of hybrid roses at a United Counties Master Gardeners seminar in Morrisburg. Photo — Barbour

"It gave us a better understanding of winter hardy roses," said Master Gardener Mark Daniher. "We hold at least one of these technical updates each year so we are better prepared to advise home gardeners."

Arnold retired from his work as a research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-food Canada about 10 years ago. His areas of expertise included plant nutrition, tissue culture, and the development of new miniature roses. Following his retirement, he and his wife Catherine established Northern Hybrid Roses at Green Valley, near Alexandria, to breed winter hardy and disease resistant roses.

Through their continuing research, the couple is developing a wider variety of roses that can survive cold temperatures with only a snow cover as protection. They are also working on improving flower form and extending the range of colours.

The Arnolds do not sell their roses directly to the public, but provide stock to distributors who then reproduce the plants to build an inventory.

"We hope that distribution can begin in Canada this year, but it will probably be another three years before distribution will start in Europe — the plants are still being tested there," said Arnold.

Did you know?

The term "everything's coming up roses" originated in the United States in the 1950s, and is the title of a popular song from the musical *Gypsy*. The words to that song (lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and music by Jule Styne) give the meaning to the expression: "Things look swell, things look great, gonna have the whole world on a plate. Starting here, starting now honey, everything's coming up roses." It is interesting to note that some 20 years earlier, in 1932, the Democrats launched a presidential campaign promising that "Everything will be Rosy with Roosevelt."

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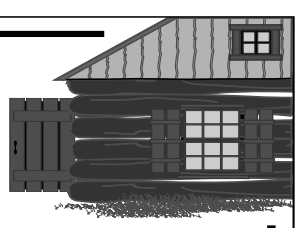

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Creating a garden of a thousand scents

Nothing is more pleasing to a gardener than to detect a scent floating in their little corner of paradise. Because of the huge choice that is available these days, you can now create a scented garden without upsetting the structure of the existing garden. One important thing: make the wind and the soil your allies.

For example, scents do not stay in a garden where the wind is pervasive. It's important, therefore, to create a screen against the prevailing wind. As well, you need to build a small wall to the west or south of your garden where you can cultivate plants that release their scent in the heat.



Heliotrope; an annual with a very subtle vanilla perfume.

Don't hesitate to cultivate fragrant plants in pots as well. By placing delicately scented plants at head height, the visitor will easily detect all their subtle aromas.

Last point: take into consideration that some plants release their perfume at nightfall. Don't deprive yourself of this type of flower when planning your scented garden. Petunias, stocks, jasmine, and honeysuckle are good choices.

Last piece of advice: don't forget to cultivate scented plants along the pathways or underneath a window. The lilac is a good example. A real pleasure for all the senses!

Room to grow

If you're looking for more space, why not create an outdoor garden room instead of adding on to your home? Surround yourself with walls of flowers and ferns, and use natural furniture to create a place to which you can escape.

Use elevation change to your advantage: is the land sloping, steep, or flat? Changes in elevation divide space gracefully and effectively.

Think multipurpose; create "sitting walls" – fat stone walls 18 to 22 inches above grade that provide seating and surfaces for plant containers. Soften the stone by edging it with masses of petunias, cupflowers, sweet alyssum, bellflowers, or coral flowers, or let climbing roses fling themselves over it.

Is the area wet or dry? Water is a natural delight. Take advantage of a stream or pond by adding a path, perhaps a bridge, and plantings that like wet ground, such as primroses or Siberian irises. If you want to add a water feature, try a small tub or recirculating fountain.

Use furniture and focal points to add personality and complete the sense of intimate enclosure. Furnishing a garden room entices people to pause and enjoy it. It also declares your style, as well as the function of the space. Bring out your personality with furniture that you make or find, refreshed with a coat of paint or colourful cushions.

The preceding is an excerpt from the 2008 edition of The Old Farmer's Almanac All-Seasons Garden Guide, *which is on sale wherever books and magazines are sold.*

Do you know how to plant conifers?

With summer just around the corner, preparations are well underway to embellish your garden. A next step would be to plant a few conifers. Cedars, spruce, pines, fir trees, must all be treated with great care.

Above all, new plants need time to develop their root systems. They also need water. As a matter of fact, during the winter, evergreen plants, including conifers, lose a lot of water through their foliage. The spring and beginning of summer are, therefore, the best time of year to plant these trees.

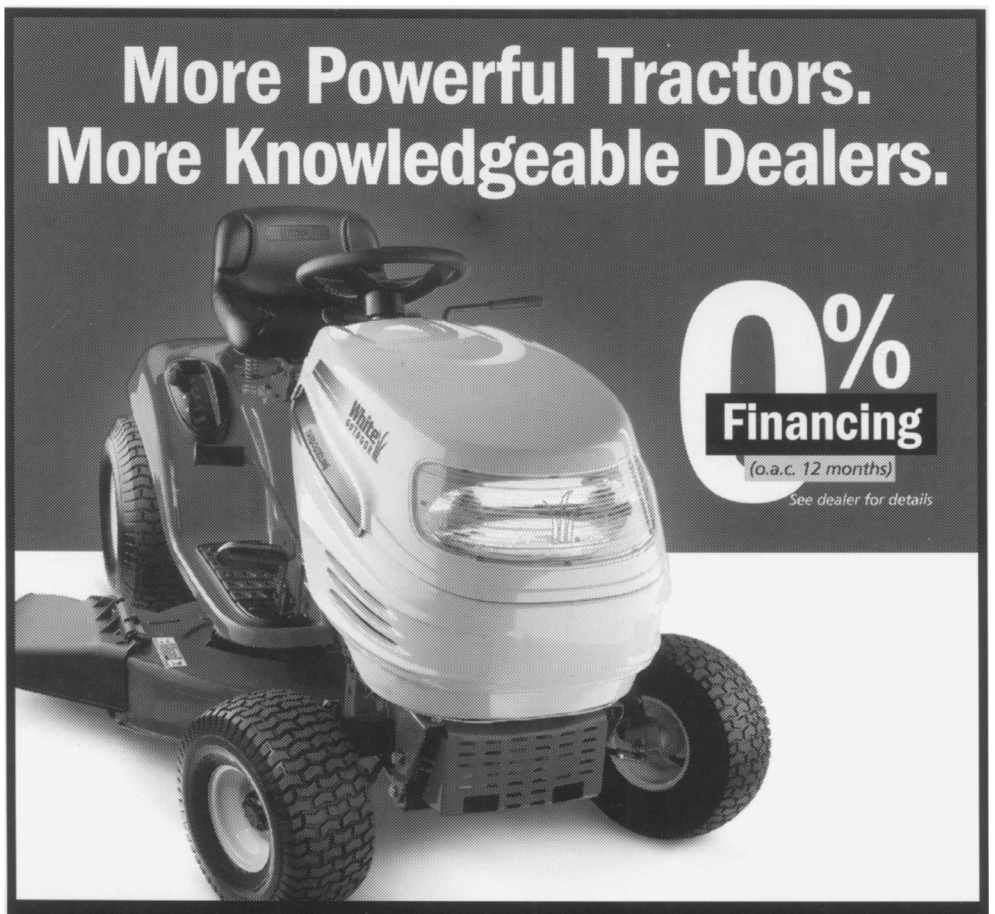
Start by choosing young trees that are strong and healthy. During transportation from the garden centre to your house, be sure that they are well protected from the wind.

Prepare planting holes in advance. These should be 60 centimetres larger and 20 centimetres deeper than the ball of soil surrounding the roots. The soil at the bottom of the hole should be well loosened (aerated) by incorporating moist peat moss. Place the plant at the bottom of the hole. If the roots are wrapped in jute, just open up the wrapping and roll it down to the bottom of the hole. The jute will decompose rapidly and the roots will pierce it easily.

Once the roots are covered with enriched earth, water generously to completely soak the new earth. Finish the planting by creating a slight depression around the stem of the plant. This way, water will accumulate more easily and will drain directly to the roots. When autumn comes, make sure the roots of your new trees are saturated with water so that they can easily survive the rigors of winter.



Be sure your new conifers never lack water. Create a slight depression around the stem of the plant so water can accumulate and drain directly to the roots.







Vegetation surrounding a water garden looks more alive.

Composting 101

As more and more municipalities turn towards eco-friendly policies, composting is also becoming much more wide-spread. Projects are being set up everywhere and citizens are actively encouraged to start composting. Composting helps improve the quality of the environment by limiting the amount of garbage sent to waste management sites as well as producing a natural material that will benefit your flower or vegetable garden.

Instead of buying a ready-made container, it's possible to make an unobtrusive compost pile that will blend into your landscape. You will need four, two-metre long, posts made of treated wood and enough chicken wire to enclose the four sides. Start by turning the soil over where the composter will be built. At each of the four corners, drive in a post to a depth of 60 centimetres and then staple the chicken wire to each post.

Next, cover the bottom with small, dry branches or some straw. This will allow for better air circulation in the compost pile. When disposing of material to be composted, always alternate layers of carbon-rich matter (leaves, branches, straw, grass...) and nitrogen-rich matter (fruits, vegetables...). Once a week, add some garden earth and aerate the compost pile while verifying the moisture level. If the compost isn't damp, add water until it is about as wet as a well wrung-out sponge.

If the mix is stirred once in a while, compost will be produced in about three or four months. If you leave the mix untended, without bothering to stir it, it will take about a year to produce compost.

A place for dreaming

The water garden

Source of life and freshness, the presence of water in any landscape creates beautiful movement – a place for dreaming. Whether it's of modest or grandiose dimensions, the water garden quickly becomes one of the central features of the garden allowing the creation of many varied settings.

A pond can fit into just about any type of landscape. We just need to take the necessary time to plan the work well. If the garden is well conceived from the beginning, its upkeep will be easy. New gardeners sometimes have the tendency to plan a first pond that is too small. You must realize that the smaller the dimensions, the more of a challenge the environmental balance will be.

For example, a small pond whose area is less than five square metres needs a lot more maintenance and care than a bigger pond. Water quality is also much easier to regulate in a larger pond.

Don't hesitate to ask advice from neighbours who already have a water garden, or from your local garden centre, regarding your choice of plants. The selection of plants has to be made in function with the size of the pond.

Depth is also important, especially in our climate where the rigours of winter are very real. The depth should be at least 90 centimetres in the middle, especially if you have fish. If the water isn't deep enough there is a good chance they will die.

Some planting tips

Every well-informed gardener can tell you that the success of a beautiful garden depends to a large extent on the planting stage. There's nothing simpler than planting but, by following these few suggestions, your chances of success are much greater.

• Ideally, choose a cloudy or even a rainy day as young plants don't like the sun's hot rays.

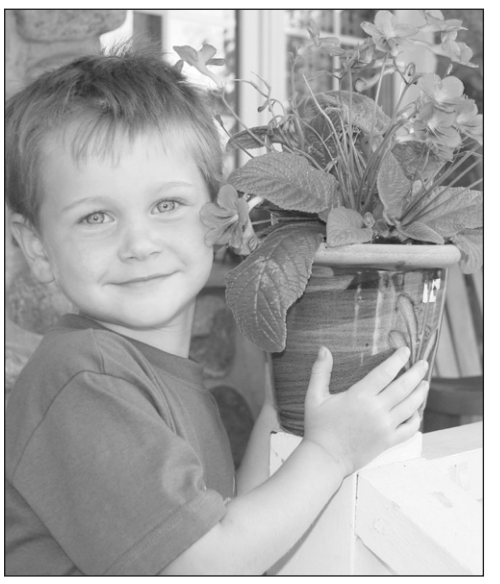
• Wait until the soil has had time to warm up and finish before the cool of the evening.

• Be sure to give enough room to your plants. For example, some trees and conifers that fit into the trunk of your car when you buy them, develop into giants when mature.

• Still on the subject of trees, it's worthwhile to have them delivered as it's not recommended to transport them on the roof of your car. The new shoots of the trees risk drying out with speed.

• If you buy several different varieties of perennials, don't forget to identify each plant with the help of a tag as it isn't always easy to recognize them as the summer goes by.

• Plants with bare roots should be planted during their dormant period, either at the beginning of the planting season or in the autumn, whereas those that are sold in containers can be put in the ground at anytime throughout the gardening season.



Young children always love doing their share when it comes time for planting.

Casting light on lighting systems

Good lighting incorporated into a landscape design has two benefits: it allows us to take advantage of the outdoors safely, even late at night and highlights the different elements of the garden.

During the day, lighting effects are not possible. However, once the evening comes, imagine the spectacular results you can achieve by judiciously choosing your lighting system. For example, you can highlight a beautiful group of shrubs by hiding one or a few floodlights in the lowest plants. Somewhere else, a blue light bulb can make the colour of the flowers appear twice as vivid.

There are a few rules to follow to create perfect lighting for the garden. If you want to use lighted areas such as the terrace or a playground, be sure that the lighting is sufficient for everyone's security. Dark areas, especially where children will be playing, can be dangerous. To make a small garden look bigger, place the floodlights far from the house. In this way, they will also highlight other areas of the garden.

Avoid coloured lights (except for blue and white). For example, a red light would give a dirty brown colour to green foliage. Before purchasing any sort of lighting system, walk around your lot at night with a light. Not just with a flashlight, but rather with a storm lantern or a floodlight equipped with a long electrical extension. Move around the garden putting down the light and judging the results. Once the sites have been selected and the number of floodlights decided on, choose equipment that have bases made of aluminum alloy, stainless steel, bronze or plastic.

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Ornamental grasses – such magical plants

Grasses are becoming more and more popular with gardening enthusiasts. It's the ideal plant to bring movement to a flowerbed and it's especially good at giving a garden the natural air which more and more of us want to achieve. Certain varieties of grasses can also be used as a screen to hide a less attractive part of the garden and could even replace a hedge which needs to be revived.

For a long time now, grasses have been given the cold shoulder in Canadian gardens. It was only in the 1970s that we began to feel a certain interest in them when landscapers coming from Europe started integrating these plants into their designs.

For those who have little time to give to gardening, grasses are good choices as, once they are well established, they manage pretty well on their own and don't need much care. It's also a plant that can adapt to different kinds of soil. Canadian garden centres now offer more than 200 varieties that will answer all your wants and needs.

Finally, you should know that grasses need very little fertilizer. At the time of planting, bone meal helps stimulate the root system, which aids in the rapid establishment of the plants. After that, we can forget about fertilizer. Every fall, just be happy to spread a bit of compost at the feet of the plants.



The Gold Bar, an exceptionally decorative grass with brilliant yellow, striped foliage. Garden centres offer more than 200 varieties of ornamental grasses.

Show of support

Floriculture producers vote to be represented by Flowers Canada

The majority of Ontario's greenhouse floriculture growers who participated in a recent vote support Flowers Canada (Ontario) being designated as their representative association and paying a mandatory licence fee to fund the organization.

A total of 78.4 per cent of greenhouse floriculture growers representing 90.7 per cent of the square footage of those casting valid ballots voted in favour of the following: "Are you in favour of Flowers Canada (Ontario) being designated as the representative association for all greenhouse floriculture growers in Ontario of cut flowers, potted plants, annual bedding plants and propagative plant materials, and paying an annual licence fee of two cents per square foot of greenhouse area to a maximum annual fee payable of $13,000 (650,000 square feet) to finance the association's activities to stimulate, increase and improve the producing or marketing of greenhouse floriculture products in Ontario?"

"The Commission needed to see a clear majority of growers supporting such a request before we could confidently proceed with a recommendation to the Minister, and that is reflected in this outcome," said Dave Hope, chair of the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission.

The mail-in expression of opinion vote was conducted by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission between January 10 and January 23. Only greenhouse floriculture growers growing 20,000 square feet or more of cut flowers, potted plants, annual bedding plants and-or propagative plant materials were eligible to vote on the question. Growers growing less than 20,000 square feet would be exempt from paying the mandatory fee.

A total of 51.7 per cent of the 356 known eligible greenhouse floriculture growers who received a ballot participated in the vote.

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Top five myths about exterior wood stain

According to stain experts there are certain common myths do-it-yourselfers fall victim to when it comes to exterior wood stain. Here are the top five traps to avoid for a perfect result from Dominique Pépin, Senior Brand Manager of Sico paints.

1. High-quality wood stains do not peel.

False. Regardless of the product used, if the surface is not prepared properly and the wrong application method is used, it could peel. Whether your wood was previously stained or not, you must start by washing the surface using a cleaner. It is important to remove loose grey wood fibres and stains caused by mildew, dust and moss since these contaminants will keep the stain from adhering properly.

If your wood was previously stained and the stain is uneven or peeling, Sico's strippers will be valuable tools to help you remove old layers of stain so that the new one can adhere properly. Also it's important to read each product's specific instructions found on the side of the label before starting the application.

2. New wood surfaces do not need to be sanded before staining.

False. To remove imperfections and prepare wood's pores to receive stain, the new wood surface must absolutely be sanded using 80-grit sandpaper. On vertical surfaces, use 120-grit sandpaper for a finer finish. Check that you have sanded enough by sprinkling a few drops of water onto the surface. If the water pearls, you must continue



sanding; if the water penetrates the wood, the stain is ready to be applied.

3. Applying stain with a roller is much faster than with a brush.

False. Since wood floors warp with time, it becomes difficult to reach certain areas with a roller. A brush is therefore the best tool for applying stain evenly. There are specially designed brushes whose length and width allow for quick application. You can also attach the brush to the end of a long handle so that you can work standing up, in a comfortable position.

4. Although the manufacturer suggests applying two coats of stain, it is better to apply two more to ensure the wood is well-protected.

False. A coating that is too thick compromises one of stain's main advantages: its flexibility, which allows it to follow wood's movement without cracking or peeling.

5. Exterior stain can be applied on any nice summer day.

False. If it is warmer than 25 degrees or if the surface to be stained is very hot to the touch, the stain will not have time to penetrate the wood deeply or blend with the former stain, which will lead to peeling. Furthermore, if the stain dries too quickly, it is difficult to apply and does not produce the desired finish, leaving behind brush marks and an uneven look.

"When it comes to your staining projects you now have plenty of options to harmonize or complement your outdoor surroundings," according to Pépin. In fact, Sico has developed a complete new line of high quality stains with completely new and very trendy colours for outdoor wood projects to help homeowners achieve today's modern look. More information and advice on wood stains and staining can be found at www.sico.ca.

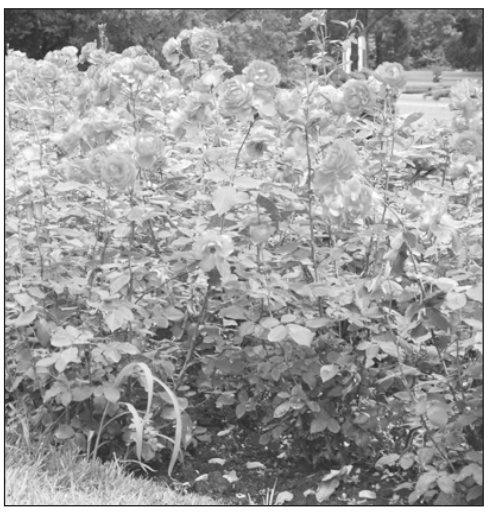
- News Canada

Roses – the organic way

It's not rare to hear gardening enthusiasts, when stopping in front of a beautiful rose bush, exclaim: "It's very beautiful, but it's too much work!" Indeed, for these people, the rose bush is a fragile plant with all its diseases such as black spot and powdery mildew. It's not that long ago that this problem was a reality but the situation has changed a lot over the past few years.

First of all the hybridizers, that is to say the specialists who work to create new varieties, have done a remarkable job in developing roses which are much more disease-resistant. Certainly, it's not perfect yet, but the progress realized over the past few years makes it an error to deprive ourselves of roses. It's not surprising now to hear informed gardeners repeating that a garden without roses isn't a garden at all.

You should also know that preventive treatments are possible while at the same time respecting our mistreated environment. To prevent the appearance of black spot on the leaves of the rose bush or powdery mildew the length of its stem, all you have to do is put 15 millilitres of bicarbonate of soda and the same amount of insecticidal soap in four litres of water. Generously spray the foliage of your rose bushes with this mixture and you won't have any problems. This treatment should be repeated approximately every two weeks, from May to September.



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In the spring, think lawn!

Are the months of May and June still a bit cool? It's the ideal time, before the heat of summer, to revitalize your lawn. If you wait too long, the sun's hot rays will burst the grass seeds like popcorn or they will be gobbled up by hungry birds.



To revitalize your lawn, you need three basic ingredients: black earth, grass seeds chosen according to the area to be revitalized, and a good possibility of rain.

To revitalize your lawn, you need three basic ingredients: black earth, grass seeds chosen according to the area to be rejuvenated, and a good possibility of rain. The recipe is the same whether you're sowing in the sun or the shade: place a large container (a clean garbage can, a barrel, a wheelbarrow...) near the area to be worked on and fill it three quarters full of earth. Add two good handfuls of grass seed and mix well before tipping it on the ground. Spread the earth evenly using a rake.

The spring rains will do marvels for this new grass. Not only will you be benefiting the environment by not using tap water, but you will save yourself many evenings, standing outside, copiously watering your newly seeded lawn. If it doesn't rain enough, you must still make sure that the earth remains moist. It's not advisable, therefore, to revitalize a large area of grass during the hot, dry summer months.

Grass also needs nutrients to grow strong and healthy, so don't forget to spread natural fertilizers in the spring, once more in the summer and a last time in the fall.

Avoid fighting over the fence

Whether it's for the children's security or to have more privacy, the installation of a fence requires some basic preparation.

The first step is to decide on the placement of the fence. Obvious? Not always. If you're not careful, you could end up having either too little material or so much that you won't know what to do with it all. Worse, you could end up encroaching on your neighbour's property.

First of all, check your property plans. If you don't have them anymore you could go to the municipal office and check their records. Build your fence about forty centimetres inside your property line to be certain of not crossing it.

When it's time to decide definitely on the fence's position, use a few stakes and a long string. Place the first stake where you plan on creating an angle. Stretch the string with a second stake to the next angle to be created. Keep on going in the same way until you have covered the linear surface required.

When you are surrounded by string and stakes, do a few more calculations before putting up the fence: do you have enough space for the patio table, the barbecue and the play set? Would it be better to move the south side of the fence? Should you leave some free space without a fence, for the shed that you need? Can the pool that you want be installed without having to move the fence?

Safety first when working outdoors

Everything's decided: the plan is made and you'll finish building your deck before your holidays start. The list of materials is ready and your brother-in-law has promised to come and help you. The ground is marked out and you'll start to dig tomorrow morning. But what about your safety and the safety of your brother-in-law? Whether it's about building a deck, a shed, installing a pond or erecting a play set for children, safety must always be a priority.

Add a carpenter's belt or apron to your shopping list. You'll use it to keep any sharp tools in. It's very dangerous to walk around with pockets full of nails! Before starting work, inspect all your tools to make sure that they are in good condition, with no loose or missing parts. The loose head of a hammer could turn into a missile! Don't forget to check the wiring on your power tools as well.

Even if the weather is cold, don't wear loose clothing such as a flapping shirt or a sweater with wide sleeves. If you have long hair, tie it back or tuck it under a cap. When working with a power tool, don't stand with your feet on wet ground and make sure to have proper lighting.

Protect your eyes at all times with a plastic visor or working glasses. Wear ear plugs if you're working with very noisy tools. Don't forget to wear gloves when handling rough material or a mask when sawing wood or spraying paint.

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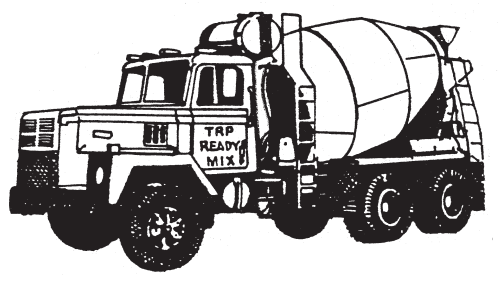

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Happy Gardening
and remember to BEND YOUR KNEES!



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Making the most of your space

To give an illusion of spaciousness to your patio, play with shapes and levels. Furnishing a tiny garden surrounded by walls, fencing or enclosures, can create a warm and convivial living space where it's good to relax and entertain friends.

If space is limited, it would probably be best to cover the ground with bricks, large paving stones, a wooden floor or a synthetic outdoor covering.

Next, learn to play with the vertical space. Create raised flowerbeds, planted with different types of vegetation. Mix perennials, annuals and herbs to light up this area. As well, don't hesitate to bring out your house plants! They will really benefit from the summer sunshine to grow strong and vigorous. At the same time it will cost you less to embellish your outdoor space.

To make the most of the vertical space, go for hanging plants or use ivy to cover the walls or fences which surround your terrace.

Finish by choosing light coloured furniture in white, grey or beige tones. Avoid tables seating ten people and high-backed chairs with thick cushions, which are perhaps very comfortable, but at the same time take up a lot of space.

Into the vegetable garden!

For many of us, looking after a vegetable garden is more than just a simple hobby: it's an economical way of feeding ourselves, it satisfies our survival instinct, and it's a philosophy!

Indeed, if you're an enthusiast for healthy foods, it's a good bet that you like to garden, even if it only involves a few herbs in your kitchen window. And don't fool yourself into thinking that a lack of space means that you can't garden! It isn't necessary to have a five metre by 10 metre garden to produce some good vegetables. Do you have a balcony that's in the sun for a few hours every day? With two or three flower boxes and a bit of imagination, you can create your own mini-garden.

Whoever talks about vegetable gardens, talks about tomatoes. As tomatoes grow upwards, you don't need much room to cultivate them. A bit of string and some stakes will enable you to support the plants. Other good choices for a mini-garden: peppers and herbs.

Whether you have a garden with unlimited space or just a few flower boxes converted into a vegetable garden, it is important to use enriched soil. Natural fertilizers, including the compost made from your own kitchen waste, will do marvels. Insecticides or pesticides should be avoided. Be sure to water your garden well. Watering thoroughly two or three times a week is better than watering superficially on a daily basis.



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