

Salute to Spring

Just in time for the spring home improvement and gardening season, our special section is loaded with ideas, advice, inspiration, and offers from our advertisers.

This is a one-stop guide to enhancing your home, inside and out.



May 2015





Special Supplement to the Winchester Press

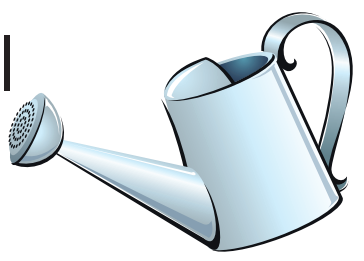


The staff at Richie Feed and Seed are working hard on securing more perennial plants for their display, as the longevity of the perennials is something that more customers are interested in. Right now, the store only has half of what is expected for their perennial display this season. From right to left: Brian Coyne, manager Ray Gauley, and Katie Whetung.



At Richie Feed and Seed, there are hundreds of vegetable seeds to choose from if you want to start your own homegrown veggie garden. "It's so yummy to grow your own [vegetables]," said Katie Whetung, pictured at right with employee Brian Coyne, left. Press Photos – Gosselin

Starting a small garden with Richie Feed and Seed



Alicia K. Gosselin
Press staff

WINCHESTER – Picking fresh veggies from your own homegrown plants can feel like a big accomplishment. But you don't necessarily need a big space to harvest a great vegetable garden.

With hundreds of vegetable seed varieties available at Richie Feed and Seed in Winchester, it's become the go-to spot for beginner and avid gardeners alike who want to start or replenish their own vegetable patches.

And according to the store's manager, Ray Gauley, it doesn't take much room.

"People who want to grow vegetables always think they need a big garden, but that's not true," said Gauley. "You can grow herbs and things on your window sill. You can grow tomato plants in a patio planter."

When starting a small-spaced garden, consider the plants that take up less space. Plants to avoid (the one's that need more room) include asparagus, brussel sprouts and celery. Legumes like peas and pole beans are a great choice for a small-spaced patio planter.

"It's not just flowers. We have a whole lot of options for small-container veggie gardens…Fill them full of soil, some seeds, and sit them on your patio," said Katie Whetung, an employee at the Winchester-based store. "You can grow a dinner's worth of tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, right on your porch."

With five Richie Feed and Seed locations around the Ottawa area, the Winchester location was opened with the intention to provide farmers and gardeners with more options locally.

Not only does Richie Feed and Seed offer a vast array of flower and vegetable seeds to choose from, but they also have hundreds of options for potted annuals, perennials, garden supplies, bird feeders, animal feed, and lawn maintenance materials.

Did you know?

Birds, raccoons, skunks, moles, and other rodents may feed on grubs that reside just under the thatch of the lawn, and animals may tear up lawns in search of this delicacy. Treating the grub problem usually alleviates damage caused by animals. Getting rid of the insects can revitalize the lawn.

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Amendments can help produce healthy soil

Mother Nature provides plenty to grow healthy lawns, gardens and landscapes. But as many homeowners know, some lawns sometimes need a little extra boost to complement nature. Soil sometimes must be amended so plants can thrive. Only after the right composition is created can plants take root and perform to the best of their abilities.

A soil amendment is any material added to soil to improve its physical properties. The goal is to provide a better environment for roots. Depending on what you are starting with, any number of ingredients must be added to the soil recipe. Water retention, permeability, drainage, aeration, nutrients, and water infiltration are some of the things amendments can improve when added to soil.

Before homeowners add anything to the soil in their yards, it is first important to determine what that soil needs. Homeowners may notice if soil is overly sandy or full of clay, but further testing can confirm what the soil is lacking.

The OMAFRA accredited soil testing programme for home gardens and lawns provides recommendations for nitrogen, phosphate and potash along with a recommendation for the amount of lime to apply if required. The recommendations are designed to provide good plant growth while preventing or correcting nutrient deficiencies. Sampling every two or three years is recommended.

Several laboratories are accredited to provide a soil testing service to home gardeners. See the Accredited Soil Testing Laboratories in Ontario online at www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/resource/soillabs.htm

Organic matter is a preferred soil amendment used by professional and novice gardeners alike. The decaying remains of plants release nutrients that are absorbed into the soil and used by microorganisms and bacteria, creating a healthy environment for plants. Organic material may break up compacted soil to increase drainage. In sandy soil, organic material serves as a sponge to keep water from washing away. Compost and manure are two examples of frequently used organic materials. Both of these materials are readily available at little cost.

Compost can be produced at home from food and plant scraps. Raked leaves and small amounts of grass clippings can be added to compost. Over time, the decomposition process will turn scraps into a nutrient-rich, dark brown substance that provides many plants with all they need to thrive. Compost is particularly useful in vegetable gardens.

Manure should come from herbivores, or those animals that sustain themselves on grass and other plants. Carnivores can produce harmful bacteria in their waste, which is not safe to use in gardens, particularly food-bearing gardens. Manure can be commercially purchased, or avid gardeners can work out arrangements with nearby farmers. Dried manure is preferred because it will have minimal odour.

Additional forms of organic amendments include wood ash, sphagnum peat, wood chips, sawdust, and worm droppings.

Inorganic amendments also may be used, and are usually relied on to improve water retention and drainage. Vermiculite, perlite, pea gravel, and sand are examples of inorganic amendments. A combination of organic and inorganic amendments can create the perfect mix for your needs.

Soil amendments typically are added to new and unplanted beds. Peat moss and shredded bark take years to decompose and will serve as long-term amendments in the soil. Compost breaks down quickly and may need to be worked in more frequently.

Experts recommend spreading amendments on the planting bed and then using a rake or tiller to work it in to a depth of about nine inches. Particularly sandy soil or soil with a lot of clay may need more amendments.

Permanent plants, such as trees or shrubs, also can benefit from the extra nutrient boost amendments provide. Sometimes it is sufficient to spread the material over the soil surface and let rainwater and wildlife help distribute it to the plant roots. Otherwise, work it into the top inch or two of the dirt with a hand cultivator.

Soil amendments can be the difference between a thriving garden and healthy landscape and one that has seen better days.



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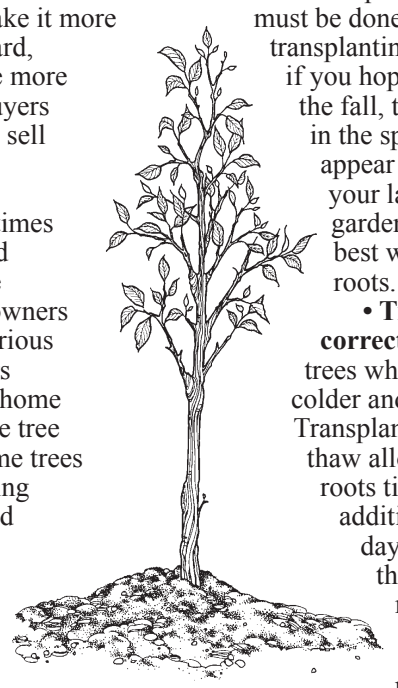
Transplanting trees no small task

An alluring landscape can make a home that much more enjoyable. Many homeowners devote considerable time to their lawns and gardens, and that devotion can pay both instant and long-term dividends. A well-groomed landscape can make it more enjoyable to relax in the yard, and such a property will be more attractive to prospective buyers when homeowners want to sell their homes.

But even the most well-designed landscapes sometimes need some rearranging, and those changes may involve transplanting trees. Homeowners may transplant trees for various reasons. Some homeowners might be moving to a new home and want to take a favourite tree along with them, while some trees simply outgrow their existing space and need to be moved elsewhere on the property. Regardless of why trees need to be transplanted, homeowners can take several steps to ensure the process goes as smoothly as possible.



• **Determine why the tree needs to be moved.** Some trees that are not thriving in their existing location may not benefit from a transplant. For example, a tree with a pest infestation might need to be replaced rather than transplanted. Determining the reason behind a transplant can save you the trouble of transplanting that won't benefit from the move. If a tree is not getting adequate sunlight in its present location, then transplanting it to a different location on your property with more exposure to sunlight might reinvigorate the tree. If soil is the problem, than transplanting the tree might prove ineffective unless you also test the soil where you plan to move the tree and adjust it so the tree can thrive.

• **Prune the tree roots.** Tiny roots that extend beyond the tree absorb water and nutrients, and such roots need to be pruned before transplanting a tree. Landscaping professionals note that root pruning stimulates the growth of new small roots nearer to the tree's trunk, and these newer roots will be dug up when the time comes to transplant the tree. Root pruning must be done well in advance of transplanting the tree. For example, if you hope to transplant the tree in the fall, then do your root pruning in the spring before new buds appear on the tree. Speak with your landscaper or a nearby garden centre to determine the best way to prune your tree's roots.

• **Time your transplant correctly.** Avoid transplanting trees when temperatures are colder and the ground is frozen. Transplanting before or after a thaw allows the transplanted roots time to develop. In addition, transplanting the day after you have watered the soil around the tree reduces the stress on the tree's roots, making it easier to keep the root ball intact.

• **Protect the root ball.** When transplanting a tree, make sure the root ball does not dry out. If it does, the tree likely won't thrive in its new location and all your hard work will have been for naught. Cover the root ball with damp burlap or canvas so it can retain more of the moisture it will need to adapt to its new location.

• **Plant the tree sooner rather than later.** While you can store a transplanted tree before you plant it elsewhere on your property, storing it for a long period of time increases the chances that the transplant will be unsuccessful. Ideally, you want to plant the tree in its new location as soon as possible. If you must store it, make sure you don't suffocate the root ball, as roots must be kept damp or they will die and potentially cost you the tree.

Transplanting a tree can add appeal to a property and help reinvigorate an unhealthy tree.

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The grass isn't always greener on the other side – but it can be cleaner.

Using a string trimmer after you've finished mowing the lawn can be a great way to touch up tall grass in hard-to-reach areas along fences and driveways, and improve the overall appearance of the yard.

Although grooming for spring definitely comes with its challenges (read: dandelions and dead patches), creating a polished close-cut look to your lawn has never been easier with the variety of gas, corded electric and battery-powered trimmers now available at Allan Johnston Repair and Sales in Metcalfe.

With high-end and low-grade trimmers stocked from world-renowned companies such as Stihl and Husqvarna available, the Metcalfe-based store is prepared to provide both small and large-property owners with the trimmer they need for the job.

After celebrating 20 years in the family business, owners Allan and Sharen Johnston, along with their daughters, Melissa, Amy, and Allie, are all dedicated to providing reliable customer service.

"When it comes to trimmers, you have to be careful because they're not all created equal," said Allan Johnston. "The biggest thing is to get the right tool for the right job for the right user… A prosumer [large property owner] needs a more powerful and more durable piece of equipment. And that's what we can offer that the box store doesn't."

When buying a string trimmer, there are several things to consider: the size of your property, what you'll be trimming, and how long you'll be using it for. For example, you don't have to invest in an expensive, professional-grade trimmer unless you need its metal blade capability for cutting saplings and other woody waste.

Take a look at some of the differences between gas, corded electric and battery-powered trimmers offered at Allan Johnston's Repair and Sales, so you can stop fiddling around with those hand clippers and add a little extra outdoor power to your life.



Shawn Beckstead from Allan Johnston Repair and Sales shows the difference between a Stihl battery-operated trimmer (FSA 65), left, and a Husqvarna gas-powered trimmer (327 LS), right.
Press Photo – Gosselin

Gas-powered trimmers

Gasoline-powered trimmers are the best choice for tall grass and weeds, and move easily around flowerbeds and trees. Although an occasional tune-up may be required, many large property owners tend to purchase the gas-powered trimmers because they last the longest and can be used anywhere.

"As long as it has gas, it can last all day," said Johnston. "You can start right at 8 am, trim anywhere and any length of time, and it's just a matter of adding fuel to it."

Gas trimmers with two-cycle engines run on a mixture of oil and gas, whereas models with four-cycle engines offer the convenience of filling up your trimmer with the same fuel as you put in your lawn mower. Although the four-cycle engine will run cleaner, it tends to be heavier than other models, causing you to tire more quickly.

The gas-powered models also require pull-starting, so if you think you may have issues revving up your trimmer, consider an electric or battery-operated trimmer.

Corded electric trimmers

If you're looking for a light and inexpensive trimmer, consider an electric trimmer to perform comparably as gas models. They don't require tune-ups, start with push-button ease, are quieter, and produce no exhaust emissions. However, the power cord limits your range, so they are best suited to smaller yards where an extension cord can be used.

"Somebody in the city, I'd say yes, they'd most likely use a cord," said Shawn Beckstead, an employee from Allan Johnston Repair and Sales. "But anyone in the country, if you have any land at all, you're not interested in carrying the cord around. It's becoming a thing of the past."

Battery-powered trimmers

Battery-powered string trimmers deliver cord-free mobility without fueling, fumes, and pull-starting.

"The innovation going into the battery-powered tools is unbelievable," said Johnston. "It's the next big thing. You don't have tune-ups, you don't have emissions…And one battery goes with multiple products. So you can have one battery, one charger, and multiple tools."

The best of the battery-operated trimmers now edge impressively, and perform reasonably well in tall grass. However, the top gas and plug-in models still trim taller grass more efficiently.

Cordless trimmers are also heavier than the corded models and run about 30 minutes before they need a recharge, according to Johnston, which can take hours. That means even the most capable models are still best-suited to smaller jobs.

"For those who have really large properties, it's just not there yet," admitted Johnston. "It would have to have multiple batteries to keep them charged."

Husqvarna

Husqvarna actually markets a small line of gas string trimmers for both the consumer and professional market. These string trimmers are available with both two- and four-cycle engines, and many have split-shaft designs for attachments. Most of the models available at Allan Johnston Repair and Sales are gas-powered.

Stihl

Stihl is a leading manufacturer and marketer of gas and battery-operated trimmers. These premium-priced products are for consumers and pros. Stihl string trimmers are available with both two- and four-cycle engines, and electric features that reduce noise, emissions, weight, and vibration.

Did you know?

Ethanol gas shouldn't be used for your gas-powered trimmers. Because it has an alcohol base, it won't mix with the oil, and can cause piston damage. For the best results, you want to mix the oil with premium gas. For better convenience, both Stihl and Husqvarna introduced their own pre-mixed fuel for gas trimmers recently, which boasts a two-year shelf life. Both are available at Allan Johnston Repair and Sales for under $10.

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Ideas for pool perimeter landscaping

With the rise of the "staycation," more and more homeowners are turning their backyards into their own private oases. The centrepiece of many such retreats is a refreshing and inviting pool.

Whether above-ground or inground models, pools make for welcoming spots to enjoy warm days and nights. A new pool can quickly turn a yard into the "it" spot to spend vacations or cool off at the end hot summer days. While pools are often the focal point of a backyard, many homeowners want their pools to blend seamlessly with the rest of their yards. When transforming a backyard that includes a pool, homeowners should consider a few factors to ensure each afternoon spent poolside is as safe as it is fun.



Homeowners have many options with regard to landscaping the areas surrounding their pools.

Safety first

Although the goal may be to soften the lines of the pool and/or create sight barriers that will provide some measure of privacy for swimmers, homeowners must put safety above all else. Before any decorative touches are added, it is important to surround a pool with a slip-resistant surface and fencing (municipal bylaws require fences be erected around pools). Consult with a landscaping contractor, who should be knowledgeable about safety codes, or speak to the permit-issuing department at municipal office. There should be a list of requirements to ensure pool placement as well as any surrounding touches are legal and within code.

Nonslip surfaces

Concrete, pavers, and decking are popular materials used to surround a pool. Installers can make recommendations on materials and finishes, but one suggestion is to choose a rough finish. Pool water can make surfaces slippery. Concrete that is stamped or scarred provides more traction than a smooth surface. The same can be said for brick patios and pavers. Avoid smooth stones or pavers with shiny surfaces, as these may only increase the risk of falls.

Homeowners who have chosen wood or composite decking to surround a pool should talk to their contractor about nonslip protective coatings. Such coatings typically are acrylic-based liquids applied like a paint or sealer. Some composite decks may be crafted with texture or a built-in coating to reduce slipping. In addition, use nonstick mats on decks and patios to provide a little extra footing where people enter and exit the pool.

Mulch and stone

Homeowners often prefer some combination of mulch or stone to serve as a transition between the pool, concrete or paver hardscape and the lawn. Stone may be more practical for those with inground pools because it will not easily blow onto the water surface. With an above-ground pool, mulch or stone can do the trick, serving as a barrier so that pool water does not overly drench the surrounding lawn or damage grass after exposure to pool chemicals. Mulch and stone also will provide drainage from water runoff from the pool and rain.

Another advantage of having an additional barrier between the pool and lawn is that lawn clippings will not be shot into the pool when mowing. Stone and mulch can be dressed up with statues, lawn ornaments and tolerant plants.

Finishing touches

Plants can provide the finishing touches for a poolside landscape. Homeowners should keep in mind that pools are not often shaded from the sun, so plants placed around the pool will need to be sun- and drought-tolerant. Moderately growing grasses will offer a privacy barrier.

Keep trees and flowering plants far enough away from the pool's edge so they do not contribute to debris that falls into the pool, which can complicate maintenance. Also, flowering plants may attract insects and other wildlife that may interfere with your enjoyment of the pool. It's better to create a friendly environment for wildlife further away from the pool.

Homeowners who need some advice planning the landscaping around their pools can rely on the expertise of landscape architects as well as employees at lawn and garden centres. Pool companies may work with landscapers and offer recommendations to people unaccustomed to working around pools.

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Watering tips to produce healthy lawns

Homeowners often worry that their lawns won't make it through the dog days of summer looking lush. But lawns don't have to succumb to the sizzling summer sun. Oftentimes, the right watering strategies can help homeowners nurse their lawns through the hottest months of the year, ensuring the lawns make it to autumn looking as green as they did back at the height of spring.

• **Reconsider when you're watering.** Come summertime, homeowners may want a glass of water at high noon, when temperatures seem to be at their hottest. But you and your lawn are different, so the best time to satiate your thirst is not necessarily the best time to water your lawn. Watering in the middle of the day is often ineffective, as water tends to evaporate quickly in the afternoons when temperatures are peaking. Nighttime watering can contribute to the growth of fungus, which can create an entirely new set of headaches for homeowners. Morning watering sessions tend to be most effective during the summertime, as temperatures tend to be cooler in the morning, leading to less evaporation. Less evaporation means all that watering isn't going to waste.

• **Reconsider your sprinkler.** If you can't afford an in-ground irrigation system, which many landscaping professionals feel is the most effective and efficient way to water a lawn, then you likely will rely on a sprinkler to keep your lawn looking lush through the summer months. When choosing a sprinkler, look for one that shoots water out horizontally as opposed to vertically. A vertical sprinkler system is more vulnerable to wind and evaporation than one that shoots water out horizontally, so make sure your sprinkler system is sending water into your lawn and not into summer breezes.



Poorly placed sprinklers that shoot water out onto driveways and other surfaces that do not need water can rob a lawn of water it desperately needs when temperatures climb in the summertime.

• **Avoid overwatering.** Overwatering can promote the growth of fungus and adversely affect your lawn's root system, making it difficult for roots to grow deep. Speak with a local landscaping professional to determine how often you should water your lawn each week.

• **Strategically position your sprinklers.** When choosing where to put down your sprinklers, hook them up to your hose, turn them on and then watch to see where the water is going. Areas that exposed to sun are most in need of water, so make sure the bulk of your water isn't going to shaded areas beneath trees. In addition, make sure you aren't wasting water on sidewalks, patios and driveways. Sprinklers should be positioned so none of the water they're shooting out is landing on surfaces that don't need water. It sounds simple, but too often homeowners drop their sprinklers down, turn them on and then walk away without waiting to see where the water is landing. Position sprinklers or adjust sprinkler heads so all the water is landing on your lawn.

Keeping a lawn lush and green at the height of summer requires homeowners to adopt effective strategies. Such strategies can make the difference between a lush landscape and one that succumbs to summer heat.

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Pruning trees a job best left to the pros

Bountiful, healthy trees can be beautiful to behold. Many homeowners are content to leave healthy trees alone. However, trees eventually must be pruned or removed if they become safety risks or pose other threats. Trees with roots that are damaging home foundations or those with limbs overhanging property limits or power lines can be troublesome. Although homeowners can handle relatively minor tree maintenance, for a variety of reasons, many tree projects are best left to the professionals.



Avoid injury

Professional tree contractors recognize and understand the hazards associated with tree and limb removal. Trimming trees close to electrical lines puts a person at risk of being electrocuted. Professionals know how to protect themselves and prevent power outages, which can result when branches come into contact with power lines.

Professional tree services will use machinery appropriate for the task. Cherrypickers and cranes may lift workers to the correct height to work on trees, while do-it-yourselfers who rely on climbing trees or using ladders are at risk of injury.

Prevent damage to the tree

Many tree services understand the proper way to prune trees to minimize stress and damage to the tree itself. Novice pruners may inadvertently do more harm than good, resulting in proliferation of tree disease or shock. Improper pruning technique also can lead to an unsightly tree.

Liability

A professional tree service will possess the correct liability and worker's compensation insurance. This protects homeowners against litigation should someone be injured while tree work is being done.

Homeowners who damage neighbouring properties when cutting down a tree may find that they are not covered by their homeowner's insurance policies. This can be a costly mistake that's easily avoided by simply hiring a fully insured tree removal service.

The right tools

The right tools can mean the difference between a job done correctly and one that results in disaster. Professional arborists and tree services have acquired the training, tools, and techniques to perform the job safely. This includes using the right tools to tackle the job. Ropes, pulleys, cranes, stump grinders, and other heavy machinery are just a few of the tools tree services have at their disposal that the average homeowner does not.

Trimming or removing trees can be an unpredictable and potentially dangerous endeavour. Such work is best left to professionals.

Operation pollination

How to attract pollinators to your yard

Gardening expert Mark Cullen shares his top tips

Did you know that one of every three bites of food we eat is directly because of pollinators? Thanks to the work of pollinators like bees, butterflies and birds, much of the food we eat and plants we enjoy are possible.

Unfortunately, all too often the importance of pollinators is taken for granted. Globally, there is a startling decline in their populations due to climate change and excessive pesticide use. According to a recent survey conducted by Ipsos Reid, while the majority of Canadians believe that pollination is important, almost half (49%) of Canadians surveyed do not put forth an effort to attract pollinators.

Creating a pollinator-friendly habitat can be easy! Home Hardware Gardening Expert Mark Cullen shares his tips for attracting pollinators:

Diversify

Provide a diverse assortment of flowering plants and encourage native species in your garden. Favour plants that require direct sun and provide easily accessible pollen or nectar such as Monarda (also known as Bee Balm), Hollyhock and Columbine, to attract pollinators like hummingbirds and butterflies.

Go natural

Look for alternative ways to deal with pests and plant diseases. Natural remedies like a homemade combination of biodegradable liquid dish soap and water can be very effective.

Help the honeybee

Increasing the population of gentle-natured, solitary bees will help increase your garden harvest and supplement the stressed honeybee. By setting up a Bee Hut filled with EasyTear™ tubes from Home Hardware, you can raise these important pollinators with very little effort.

Encourage larvae

If you plant flowers to attract butterflies, then you need to provide them with a home. Place a small branch inside a cedar butterfly habitat to provide a perch and then place this 'house' in your flower bed. This will provide shelter for female adult butterflies and their eggs, protecting them from predators.

More expert gardening advice is available online at www.homehardware.ca.

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Five reasons to introduce gardening to your kids

Alicia K. Gosselin
Press staff

MARIONVILLE

As the kids start chanting, "April showers bring May flowers," this season, it may be an open opportunity to introduce them to the world of gardening.

"If the kids want to spend time outside gardening, do you realize how big of a plus that is?" chuckled Tony Hendrikx, co-owner of the Meadow Greens Nursery in Marionville. "The happiest parents are the ones that have their kids go to the greenhouse with them to pick plants for their own garden."

With more than 20,000 square feet of walk-through perennial gardens, products and seeds for herb and vegetable gardens, Victorian-style hanging baskets, seasonal and exotic flowers, a small fishpond, a playground, a colouring table, and special activities planned annually, the Russell-based greenhouse is a great place to take the whole family.

Tony and Jane Hendrikx, co-owners and spouses, opened Meadow Greens Nursery as a team more than 30 years ago, and have made it their business to not only cater to the needs of an avid gardener, but also to include a younger generation of gardeners into the excitement of planting.

One of the ways they spark budding interests is by hosting a "Kids Workshop Sunday," every year for children ages six and up, which is centred on a garden-themed activity. This year, the event will be held on Sun., June 7 at 2 pm, where registered junior gardeners will create a unique, custom-made patio stone. The cost for participating is $5, and covers supplies.

"It's important to include the kids on trips to the greenhouse," said Jane, who came up with the idea for the child-friendly workshop. "This year's patio stone will be decorated with all kinds of doo-dads, sparkly stones, decorated shells,





Tony and Jane Hendrikx opened Meadow Greens Nursery for business more than 30 years ago. With Tony's passion for plants and Jane's eye for design, the pair specializes in creating Victorian-style hanging baskets.
Press Photos – Gosselin

whatever they want, whatever I can dream up."

At Meadow Greens Nursery, happy gardening definitely encourages growth… And not just in the plants and flowers, but also in the children who are encouraged to be involved.

Check out five reasons why you should consider including your kids in the garden.

Encourages time spent outside

What's better than playing a video game? Playing in the dirt, of course! Getting the kids excited about spending time outside isn't always easy, but creating a hands-on way for them to be involved in the garden can be a great way to get them to spend more time outdoors. In previous years at Meadow Greens Nursery, activities for the kids during Workshop Sundays included painting a birdhouse, filling a flower basket with a fishbowl, and creating a fantasy fairy garden. The variety of activities encourages the kids to be creative and return again to participate. Investing in some flashy child-friendly garden tools (and perhaps a bucket to make some mud pies) can encourage the fun to be had just digging in the soil.

Develops a healthy hobby

One of Jane's favourite parts of the job at Meadow Greens Nursery is being able to watch generations of gardeners grow up before her eyes. Generally, when parents include their children in the garden from the start, it can instill a love for gardening in them as well.

"It's interesting how it starts… The kids will come here in strollers with their parents, then they'll come as teenagers helping mom, then they'll come as young adults choosing for their own gardens, and then they bring their own children to the workshops," said Jane, smiling. "I get to see a whole generation."

Provides opportunity to learn

Peak your kids' interest with what they eat and how food grows by using the garden as a springboard. Last year, Tony and Jane hosted an Education Day for children at the Russell Fair, talking about which vegetables grow above ground, and which ones grow underneath the ground. They also had the kids smell and identify different herbs.

"Just to see the curiosity in the kids is amazing…Some kids had no idea where their food comes from, and other kids were active in the garden, and you could tell," said Jane. "Even smelling the herbs was funny, because oregano is usually a popular spice in pizza, and many of the kids said it smelt like pizza."

Makes things easier

Tony Hendrikx admits that it can be a challenge to find everything you want for your garden in one trip to the greenhouse. When the kids are excited about plans for the garden, they'll be excited about frequenting the greenhouse, making the overall experience better for everyone. "When mom and dad say, we're going to the greenhouse, they all jump in the car," said Tony of his regular children customers. "They're excited about coming to the greenhouse because they either get to feed the fish, go on the slide, or smell the flowers…It's great for the parents because the kids love it."

Teaches patience and hard work

As any avid gardener will tell you, it can sometimes be painful waiting for your first buds to appear. But when they do, all of the vigorous digging, planting, transplanting, and watering proves worth the effort. Having the kids plant their own seeds and monitor their growth can teach them an invaluable lesson of patience and hard work.

"One year, the kids made a flower pot out of cement and left them here until the next week," said Jane. "We made them wait, but when they came back and got them, there were flowers growing in the pot. It was cool to see how excited they were about that."

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Spring is here!

Winchester BMR can help get your garden growing



At Winchester BMR, the local store has all items needed for the spring planting season, and the remaining work to take place throughout the summer and fall months. Store employee, and one-half of the garden centre team, Mandy Peddle is pictured with one of the many varieties of flowers available.

WINCHESTER

Though the intermittent heat and cold in the region is causing stress for local gardeners, spring has definitely sprung at Winchester BMR.

Those looking to dig into the dirt at their homes will find an enormous selection of flowers and complementary items at the local store.

"It's been a funny year because the season hit differently," store co-owner Ken Boje said. "We had the cool and then suddenly some heat, but it has gotten cool again now."

The inconsistency has had store employees on their toes, covering plants with tarps at night and then pulling them back in the morning to the let the sunshine in.

At Winchester BMR's new 5,500 square foot garden centre (40 feet wide by 100 feet long), an extension of the expanded store, customers have been bustling in, despite the weather.

"Some of our varieties are thinning a bit since people were out early to get what they wanted this year," Boje said. "My advice is to look early for items."

However, he added, many items have been reordered, and new product is arriving daily, in some cases. New varieties have sold very well this spring, selling out within days. An example, Boje noted, is sunpatiens, which are mold resistant and a new arrival to the store's assortment of annuals.



Fay Gallinger, the other half of the gardening duo, has been keeping a watchful eye on the plant life, ensuring the recent cold weather does no harm.

Press Photos – Uhrig



Much like the revamped store, the garden centre is more open and efficient, providing plenty of room for a full-line of shrubs, annuals, and perennials.

There are also numerous hanging baskets, an assortment of shade trees, perennials, vegetables, and much more.

Aside from plant life, the store stocks mulches, soils, sheep manure, potting soils, and black earth.

There are also decorative stones of different colours, riding tractors and push mowers, garden sheds, various tools, water hoses and watering cans, grass seeds and fertilizers, and other paraphernalia to help during planting season or to make your backyard the envy of your neighbour.

In the southeastern corner of Winchester BMR's parking lot, a showcase of sorts is taking shape with store employees laying out small portions of all landscape stones available. The shop carries products from Triple H, Permacon, Rinox, and NavaStone.

There is also lumber products, with the store stocking both brown and green pressure-treated lumber in various lengths and sizes. The store also carries a large assortment of composite decking material. (Store staff can also arrange for delivery to jobsites with the area's only boom truck.)

"We do our best to stock everything there is to do in the yard," Boje said.

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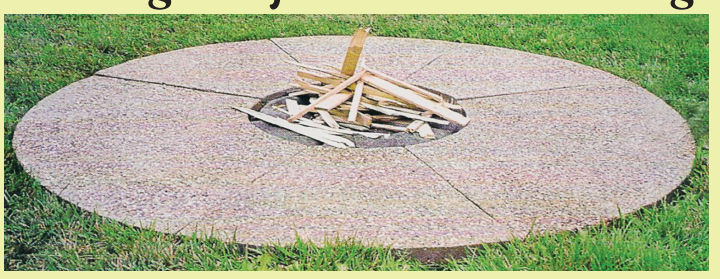

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WINCHESTER BMR

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A.B. Greenhouse offers custom planting service

Alicia K. Gosselin
Press staff

CHESTERVILLE

At A.B. Greenhouse near Chesterville, getting creative with your flowerpots has never been easier and more efficient with the specialized planting service they offer annually to return customers.

For a small soil fee, customers can bring in their own pots and planters to A.B. Greenhouse, choose the colours and flowers they want, and the staff will do the rest of the design and dirty work.

"This is a service our customers really seem to enjoy," said Darlene Petin, a long-time employee at the greenhouse with a passion for creating unique planter arrangements. "Either they tell us how they like it planted, or we discuss it, and then we plant it… They'll bring their planters back every year, and save money that way. One nice planter might cost more than $60."

Because planters are expensive, it's economical to do just use the same one every year, and switch over the soil to replenish the look.

For the greenhouse owners, Andrew and Elizabeth Brunner, it's been more than 15 years in business, and they've established their style as unique, accommodating, and efficient.

"Customers can come to us and ask where the best spot for their plants are," said Elizabeth Brunner, who designs all of the hanging baskets available in the greenhouse. "Some flowers need ample sunlight, and some only need shade, so when we talk to customers we always try to accommodate. The first thing we ask is, 'Where are you putting it?'"

With Elizabeth's eye for colour and design, she also started creating floral arrangements for special occasions, such as weddings and anniversaries.

Every year, the Brunners try and provide unique and interesting pieces to add to the garden. This year, they hired a carpenter to carve out some old tree logs and create raised wooden beds, table tops, and unique planter pots to mesh well with the rustic-look of any garden.

The team also created flowerpots out of cowboy boots and children's chairs.

"We always try and do something different," said Petin, who is a property manager as well and tends to recycle some of the throwaways she finds on the job. "Our customers always snatch up the one-of-a-kind stuff."





Left: *At A.B. Greenhouse, the owners are always trying to provide stock that is one-of-a-kind. This year, they hired a carpenter to carve out some old tree logs and create raised wooden beds, table tops, and unique planter pots to mesh well with the rustic-look of any garden.*

Below: *Darlene Petin prepared a couple of pots and planters for a customer who brought their own flowerpots. "I love doing the planters and working with the clients - it's my favourite part," she said.*

Press Photos – Gosselin

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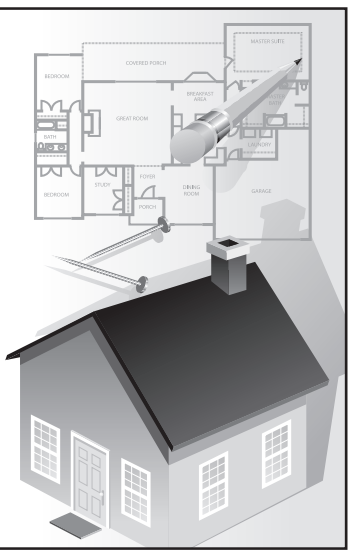

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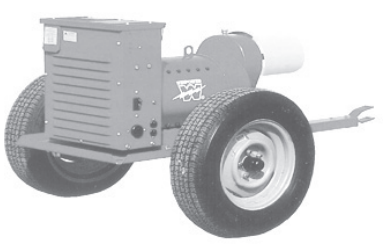

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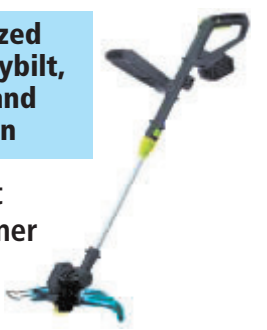

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Break ground with the right tools

The right tools for the job can be the difference between an interminable landscaping project and one that goes smoothly and efficiently. Aspiring landscapers probably have a few shovels and rakes hanging in their garages and sheds for basic landscaping work. But while such tools are effective for certain projects, when it comes to churning soil for garden beds or digging holes for outdoor structures, additional tools come in handy. It may be well worth a trip to a nearby home centre to purchase or rent one of these tools ideal for breaking ground.

Rototiller

A rototiller, sometimes called just a "tiller," is a powered garden tool designed to loosen soil prior to planting. A rototiller also can help aerate soil during the growing season. Because they reduce the need for manual spade digging or hoeing, tillers can be useful landscaping tools, particularly for homeowners who want to work efficiently.

Rototillers will break through tough soil and any plant roots. They come in a variety of sizes, and it's best to match the tool to the size of the job. Many homeowners can get by with smaller, less powerful models, especially if the tiller is only necessary at the beginning of planting season. Professional landscapers or those with large swatches of property may benefit from larger models.

Auger

Augers, both mechanical and manual, are essentially large drill bits that help move materials from one location to another. Augers are typically used to cut holes in landscapes, and they are good for post-hole drilling, which is part of the process of installing deck footings, fencing posts or other structures. Augers come in a variety of sizes, and homeowners can choose how much power they prefer. Augers can be heavy and cumbersome, and many do-it-yourselfers will find that one-person augers are more than adequate for their projects.

Augers dig deep holes, so it is always smart to have the property surveyed prior to use. This way pipes, gas lines, buried electrical lines, and any other obstructions are clearly identified prior to drilling.

Cultivator

Cultivators are similar to tillers in that they loosen soil. Cultivators are effective during the growth period of plants, when they can be used to aerate the soil and remove weeds. Cultivators come in hand-held versions and push models, and some are even motorized. Cultivators get close to plants to remove weeds without disturbing the plant. They also are used to stir in compost or fertilizer.

While many people think cultivators and tillers are the same, that is not the case. The former is less powerful and will mix the soil or stir up the top layer, while the latter can break up moderately hard ground and loosen firm soil.

When using any tools around the garden, wear the proper protection. This includes devices to protect hearing when power tools are in use as well as gloves and safety goggles. Tillers, augers and cultivators have the potential to toss soil and rocks into the air, so make sure others keep their distance while work is in progress.

How to handle weed growth



Homeowners who take pride in their lawns and gardens know just how problematic weeds can be. Weeds can make otherwise well-manicured and thriving lawns and gardens appear unhealthy and unkempt. But homeowners don't have to sit back and accept weeds as an inevitable by-product of warm weather. The following are a handful of ways homeowners can handle weed growth so all their hard work is not masked by unwelcome weeds.

• **Pull weeds after watering.** It might seem odd to water weeds, but watering weeds can actually make it easier to pull them out so they never return. When you pull weeds from soggy soil, you can more easily pull weeds' entire root system from the ground. That means you aren't just pulling the stems and leaves, but the entire weed from the ground.

• **Lay mulch.** Mulch can benefit a garden in many ways, not the least of which is helping to prevent the growth of weeds. Mulch prevents sunlight from reaching weed seeds, helping to prevent the growth of weeds before they even appear to cause you headaches. In addition, mulch helps soil retain moisture, which benefits plants as summer temperatures rise.

• **Lay landscape fabric.** Homeowners who want to do more than mulch can lay landscape fabric in their gardens as well. Landscape fabric will work in much the same way as mulch, blocking sunlight from reaching weed seeds and therefore preventing the weed seeds from germinating. When laying landscape fabric, simply cut holes in the fabric where the plants will be, lay the fabric down and then cover the fabric with mulch.

• **Plant strategically.** How you plant also can help defeat weeds before they ever appear. Speak with your landscaper or a local lawn and garden professional before planting, asking if it's possible to plant particular plants close together to prevent weed growth. Plants that are planted in close proximity to one another will block sunlight from reaching the soil, which will make it more difficult for weed seeds to germinate.

Weeds are a formidable and unwelcome foe to homeowners who take pride in their lawns and gardens. But there are several ways to combat existing weed infestations and prevent their return in the future.

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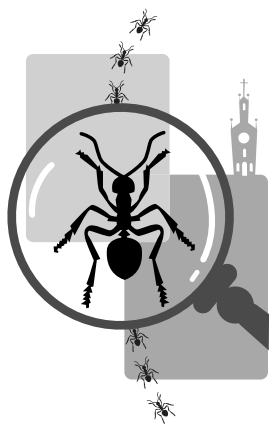
Controlling ant infestations

Few things elicit the ire of homeowners more quickly than insect infestations inside a home. Though many types of insects can find their way into a home, ants tend to be especially skilled at such invasions, causing many a headache among homeowners hoping to send their uninvited house guests packing once and for all.



Ants are attracted to food, water, and shelter, making kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry rooms ideal havens for these unwelcome critters to congregate. Such infestations can frustrate homeowners and make them uncomfortable in their own homes, but curtailing an ant infestation need not be so difficult.

• Identify the point of entry. Upon discovering an ant infestation, homeowners should conduct a thorough inspection of their homes to identify where the ants are entering the home. Ants are tiny and capable of crawling through the smallest of cracks or gaps, so every home is vulnerable to an ant infestation. Once you discover an ant inside your home, follow the ant rather than killing it, as foraging ants are typically sent from a colony located outside the home in search of moisture and food to bring back.

• Set the bait. Once you have identified the point of entry, you can then set some indoor ant bait. Employing borax, a natural mineral found in many common household products such as hand soaps and toothpastes, as their active ingredient, liquid ant baits use ants' anatomy against them to curtail infestations. Adult worker ants cannot digest solid food, which they must bring back to the colony for additional processing. Liquid ant baits exploit this physiology by making it easy for ants to transport the liquid bait back to the rest of the colony, where more ants will ultimately succumb to the bait. In addition, as the worker ant carries the bait back to the colony, it's also dropping a pheromone trail from the bait to the nest, ensuring that other ants will know where to find the bait, which they will hungrily seek out, making it easy for homeowners to eradicate the entire colony of ants.

• Expect to see more ants after setting the bait. Baiting ants requires some patience on the part of homeowners, who should expect to see more ants appear in the hours after initially laying down the baits. That's because the bait is intentionally attempting to draw ants out and attract as many of them as possible, so the more ants you see in the first couple of days after laying the bait, the more effective that bait will be at eradicating the colony. Especially large ant colonies may take up to 10 days to curtail, but smaller infestations can usually be controlled within 24 to 48 hours.

• Address the outdoors as well. Nearly all ant infestations can be traced to a colony beneath the ground outside a home. Though ants prefer to invade the interior of a home where they can find food, water, and shelter, that does not mean your home's exterior is immune to such infestations, which can typically be found by searching for foraging trails that look like a line of traffic filled with ants. That line often leads directly into a home via windows, doors, exhaust vents, faucets, sliding glass doors, and along gutters, and exterior walls.

Outdoor ant bait stations are available and work on the same principle as the indoor versions. Simply place the bait along ant trails or any areas outside the home where ants have been observed.

• Maintain an environment inside the home that's uninviting to ants. Once baits have been set and ant colonies have been curtailed, homeowners can take steps to make their homes less inviting to ants in the future. Clean kitchens regularly, quickly cleaning up spills or crumbs, and use an exhaust fan in bathrooms and laundry rooms to cut down on the type of moisture that may prove attractive to thirsty ants.



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The dos and don'ts of backyard fire pits

Once a rarity, fire pits have grown increasingly popular in recent years, as more and more homeowners turn their homes into private oases. Fire pits run the gamut from the very simple to the more elaborate, and the fire pits homeowners choose often depend on the space they have available as well as their budgets.

But even homeowners without any space or budget constraints should give careful consideration to which fire pit they ultimately install, especially if they plan to make that installation themselves. The following are some dos and don'ts of fire pits for those homeowners about to add this relaxing and popular accessory to their backyards.



DO confirm you can legally build a fire pit in your yard. Fire pits have become so commonplace that homeowners may think there are no regulations governing their construction. However, it's still best to confirm with your local municipal office if you can build a fire pit and if any restrictions apply.

DON'T proceed with the project until you have been granted official approval. Assuming you have the go-ahead to build a fire pit is not the same thing as knowing you have been approved. Starting early could result in fines if it turns out you aren't allowed to have a fire pit. But you may also begin building a bigger fire pit than the local government allows, and that could be money down the drain later. Wait until you get official word before you proceed with the project.

DO build on flat ground. The fire pit should be built on flat ground to reduce risk of accident and/or injury. A fire pit built on flat ground also means everyone can enjoy it comfortably and equally once the project is finished. If the ground around the pit is not flat, some people may be forced to sit crooked or lean forward just to enjoy the pit.

DON'T build near flammable structures. Build the fire pit far enough away from existing structures, such as your home, garage or shed, so flickering flames do not catch some wind and lead to disaster. Before building in a given spot, monitor the wind patterns for a few days by sitting in a lawn chair at the spot you ultimately want the fire pit to be. If you notice the wind is blowing toward your house, you will want to choose another area for the pit so smoke from the fire will not be blowing into your home every night.

DO choose the right size. The size of your fire pit will depend on the space you have available, but even if you have a vast swath of space, keep in mind that professional contractors typically recommend building a fire pit no bigger than 44 inches wide. Anything larger can be unsightly and may not appeal to prospective buyers down the road. In addition, an especially large fire pit may result in potentially unruly flames that can present a fire hazard.

DON'T go it alone if your DIY skills are suspect. Installing a fire pit is a relatively inexpensive DIY job, but that does not mean anyone can do it. Ground needs to be excavated and the slope of the yard must be measured so the fire pit is safe and functional for years to come. If your DIY skills are not up to snuff, hire a professional contractor so your backyard oasis does not become a costly headache.

A fire pit can turn a boring backyard into a relaxing retreat. But homeowners must adhere to the dos and don'ts of fire pits to ensure their retreat is something they can enjoy for years to come.

Keep kids away from electrical hazards

As the school year comes to an end take a few minutes to talk to your children about electrical safety hazards during outdoor play. Here are seven tips from Hydro One:

1. Obey warning signs and keep away from outdoor areas marked with signs that say "Danger" or "Danger High Voltage". Never attempt to enter a station.

2. Before climbing a tree, look up to make sure there are no hydro wires running through or beside it.

3. Stay clear of overhead power lines and wires. Be sure not to touch any overhead lines with a pole or stick as electricity could travel down that object and cause a shock that could result in a serious injury or death.

4. Fly kits, balloons and toy aircrafts in wide-open spaces, away from power lines.

5. Respect utility electrical equipment and never touch or climb poles, towers or metal transformer boxes.

6. Always try to get inside a building or a car during a lightning storm. Avoid wide open spaces and tall trees. If you're swimming, get out of the water.

7. Call 911 in case of an emergency. Don't touch someone who is being shocked until the electricity has been turned off.

More safety tips can be found at www.HydroOne.com.

– News Canada

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Add a spa and hot tub to your backyard staycation

Is this your summer to beat the traffic, leave airport hassles behind and instead, plan your vacation at home by installing a backyard hot tub and spa? No wonder staycations are so popular.

In today's fast-paced world, owning a spa is no longer considered a luxury. The relaxing therapeutic value may have even become a necessity to the estimated 510,000 spa owners in Canada. Many of them also say that they pay less for chemicals, water, and electricity than they anticipated. By using a well-fitted, insulated, rigid safety cover, you can substantially reduce evaporation from a spa, which means reduced heating costs and less chemical usage, helping to keep costs down.



If you have already purchased a spa and are deciding the best place to install it, look for an area in the backyard with a scenic view. A location with an unobstructed view of a flower garden, water feature, or nearby wooded area will provide a focal point for bathers in the spa and for those gazing at the hot tub from inside the house.

Make sure the location is easy to get to. The general rule of thumb is: the closer to the house the better. Ask yourself the following questions: Is the location private? Will you have to screen out the view of surrounding homes or nearby traffic? Where will bathers change?

For added privacy, convenience and aesthetic appeal, wooden or fabric gazebos and cabanas can be used as change rooms. Some permanent enclosed structures are even large enough to enclose an entire spa, with room to spare for dining and food preparation areas and equipment storage.

Distinctive lighting is another way to create a special mood outdoors in and around a hot tub. LED lights, both underwater and around the hot tub cabinet, can produce an array of colours in a gentle transition or in a dynamic pulsating display for entertaining.

Many spas also come equipped with illuminated waterfalls or geyser-type fountains – providing your own sound and light show.

More information is available online at www.poolcouncil.ca or toll-free at 1-800-879-7066.

– News Canada

Post safety rules for your pool

Backyard swimming pools are a great source of fun, refreshment and exercise for the entire family. Knowing and following some general pool safety rules will ensure that everyone enjoys it safely.

Recently, four renowned associations that actively promote water safety across Canada got together to produce a sign containing important rules for the safe use of pools and hot tubs. The sign has been collaboratively prepared and endorsed by the St. John Ambulance Canada, the Royal Lifesaving Society of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross and the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada.

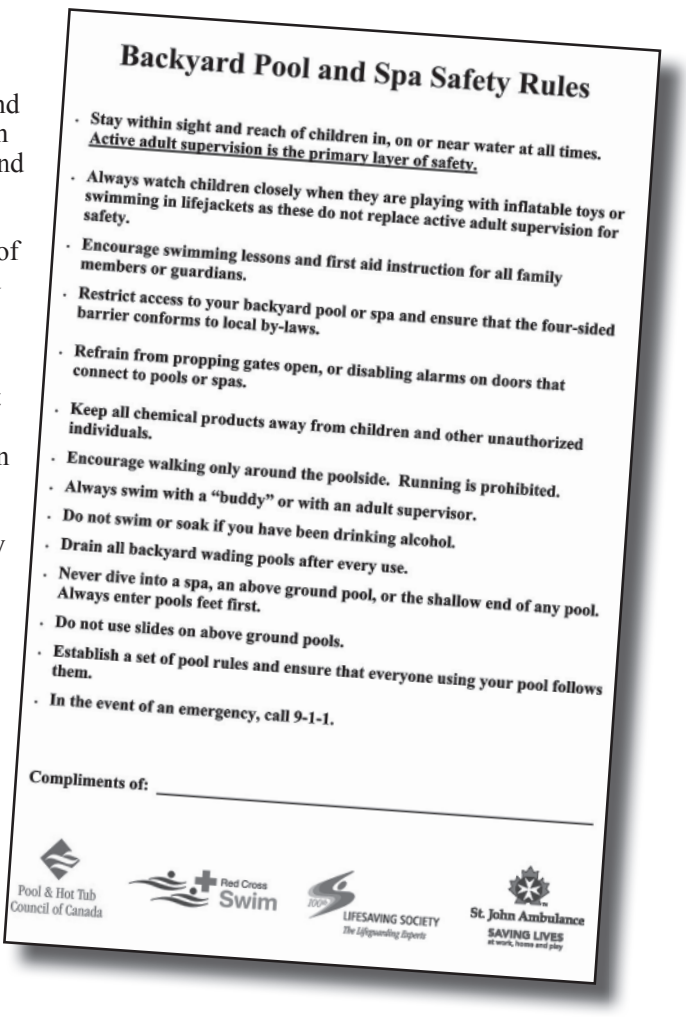
All pool owners are encouraged to post at least one of these signs in clear view at poolside. Signs can be easily affixed to gates, fences and sheds.

Valuable supplementary information and guidelines on pool and spa safety can be accessed directly from the website www.safepools.ca. In addition, attractive stickers have been produced to promote a safe backyard environment.

Signs and stickers are available in both English and French, and may be ordered from the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada, 5 MacDougall Drive, Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6S 3P3, or by using email, office@poolcouncil.ca.

To promote safety at home, maintain vigilant adult supervision at all times, and make sure all bathers are fully aware of the rules before entering the pool/spa area.

– News Canada



Backyard Pool and Spa Safety Rules

- Stay within sight and reach of children in, on or near water at all times. Active adult supervision is the primary layer of safety.
- Always watch children closely when they are playing with inflatable toys or swimming in lifejackets as these do not replace active adult supervision for safety.
- Encourage swimming lessons and first aid instruction for all family members or guardians.
- Restrict access to your backyard pool or spa and ensure that the four-sided barrier conforms to local by-laws.
- Refrain from propping gates open, or disabling alarms on doors that connect to pools or spas.
- Keep all chemical products away from children and other unauthorized individuals.
- Encourage walking only around the poolside. Running is prohibited.
- Always swim with a "buddy" or with an adult supervisor.
- Do not swim or soak if you have been drinking alcohol.
- Drain all backyard wading pools after every use.
- Never dive into a spa, an above ground pool, or the shallow end of any pool. Always enter pools feet first.
- Do not use slides on above ground pools.
- Establish a set of pool rules and ensure that everyone using your pool follows them.
- In the event of an emergency, call 9-1-1.

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Taking the plunge?

Swimming pool considerations



Now that the weather is warming up, many homeowners' thoughts are drifting toward relaxing days spent soaking up some sun by the pool. Early spring is a great time to install a pool so the family has a go-to hangout by the time summer arrives.

Installing a pool is a large financial investment, and homeowners considering adding a pool should not take that decision lightly. When attempting to determine if a pool is for them, homeowners may want to ask themselves the following questions.

Is my yard suitable for a pool?

Some yards may not be large enough for pools, while others may not meet the zoning requirements set forth by the municipality. Still other yards may have soil that's not suitable for putting in an inground pool, or may have a high water table that can delay construction.

Can we afford it?

A pool can range from a few hundred dollars for inflatable or self-installing models to many thousands for elaborate inground designs. You budget will dictate which type of pool you can afford to install.

How will we use the pool?

Decide if you're putting in a pool for the kids, to entertain the family or to make an architectural statement in the yard. Having a clear sense of purpose will help to guide the decision-making process.

Who will maintain the pool?

Many homeowners tackle the day-to-day maintenance required to keep their pools clean and safe. Others hire pool cleaners to maintain their pools and ensure the water is properly balanced. Maintenance can cost additional money, so consider this potential cost when determining if a pool is for you.

Are there any safety concerns?

Parents of young children may be hesitant to install a pool, but today's pool installation codes consider many of the potential hazards of a pool and attempt to eliminate them. Fences surrounding inground pools with self-locking gates, as well as locking ladders for above-ground pools can eliminate accidental falls into unattended pools. Your municipality will have a list of requirements for pools, so peruse the list prior to making your final decision.

If the decision has been made to move ahead with a pool, it can be helpful to understand a few facts about the process of installing a pool.

Always work with a pool-installation company that has earned positive reviews and has a stellar record of service. While this does not guarantee that the job will not encounter problems, contractors with glowing reviews tend to have earned those reviews. Read reviews from unbiased, online customers as well as any friends or family members who have used a particular pool company.

It's important that homeowners recognize that the installation of a pool may require some heavy machinery, which can damage lawns. Fence panels may have to be removed to let in excavation equipment. Sand, soil backfill or gravel may be needed to level out a landscape, and things may get noisy and messy when the installation hits full swing.

Some homeowners can handle installing above-ground pools on their own, but less DIY-savvy homeowners may want to leave the installation to a professional installer to ensure the job is done right.

Always secure the proper permits and inspections prior to using the pool. This not only ensures the safety of swimmers, but also guarantees the pool is legal.

Backyard swimming pools make for an enjoyable place to congregate when the weather is hot. Follow a few guidelines and ask the necessary questions to make a pool installation go more smoothly.

Add eye-catching backyard accessories to your summer fun

A swimming pool is a great focal point for summer entertainment, but it is only one element of a total backyard paradise. For a modest investment, homeowners can now choose from a multitude of new accessories that are sure to liven up any backyard vacation destination.

For evening patio parties, adding underwater lighting to a pool can turn a dark abyss into a radiant paradise. Fibre optic lighting allows you to control more than 100 colours to create unique light shows for any occasion. Alternatively, simple and affordable floating lights are widely available. These battery-operated lights come in many different styles and colours and can be recharged by solar power or electricity.



To relax tense muscles after a hard day of work, why not add a personal sauna to your backyard landscape? Residential saunas have been designed for easy installation and are equipped with a variety of entertainment gadgetry. Newer models use infrared heating that can reduce maintenance woes and element replacement costs down the road.

For outdoor parties in the spring and those chilly summer nights, a gas-fired patio hearth could come in handy. These contained outdoor fireplaces come in many styles and provide warmth and a focal point for lively gatherings and evening drinks.

Speaking of flames, what backyard paradise is complete without a state-of-the-art barbecue? The latest cooking grills use infrared ceramic elements to cook food in half the time while searing in flavours. And while you're shopping for that new grill, you may want to consider installing an outdoor kitchen enabling you to prepare and serve a feast without ever stepping indoors.

More information is available online at www.poolcouncil.ca or toll-free at 1-800-879-7066.

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Just how safe is your patio deck?

Follow this checklist to ensure safety and avoid collapses

It's the time of year when Canadians throw open their doors and step onto their patio decks for another season of outdoor entertaining and family barbecues.

It's also the time when smart homeowners dedicate a few crucial moments to ensuring that their decks are safe because every year, deck collapses in backyards across North America continue to cause serious injuries and fatalities.

The North American Deck and Railing Association (NADRA) a trade organization of deck manufacturers, dealers and builders, estimates that 40 million or more decks in North America are more than 20 years old.

Some homeowners are avoiding deck repairs and failure by turning to new 'high tech' deck systems that are maintenance free, such as the Canadian-made SigmaDek system featuring aerospace aluminum and porcelain components that will not wear out.

As part of NADRA's annual "Check Your Deck" public awareness campaign, they offer homeowners this checklist for patio deck safety:

• Examine all areas of your deck for split or decaying wood, particularly where the deck attaches to the house, near the railings and stairs, and all support posts beneath the deck surface where moisture accumulates;

• Fasteners such as nails, screws or anchors used during installation can come loose over time. Check to ensure firm connections and repair as needed;

• Railings and banisters can get loose and become particularly dangerous due to wear and tear over time. Test them to ensure they are firmly in place;

• Examine stairs to ensure each step is solidly in place and as a precaution never clutter stairs with planters, décor or any items that can pose a tripping hazard;

• Wood deck coatings are durable but they can wear over time, particularly with the typical extremes of cold and heat in Canada. Examine deck boards for a consistent surface and renew waterproof coating or paint as needed for ongoing protection from the elements;

• Lighting can present a trouble source when debris builds up or when lights become blocked by plants or tree limbs. Check all deck lighting to ensure light covers are not in contact with anything and examine all wiring and electrical cords being used outdoors to ensure a safe connection. Cords that become loose can also present a tripping hazard so check for proper placement as well;

• Even safe decks face the risk of damage or collapsing if nearby trees have large limbs that overhang the deck area. Be sure there is no danger that any tree limbs could come in contact with your deck in the event that they break off unexpectedly during a storm or due to age and decay.

For more deck safety tips and information visit www.sigmadek.com.

– News Canada

Make your backyard a 'tick-free zone'

Certain ticks can spread serious illness like Lyme disease. While they're typically found in forests and overgrown areas between the woods and open spaces, research tells us that tick populations are spreading. It is possible to be bitten outside of these locations. Follow these easy steps to help reduce tick habitats near your home:

• Keep the grass mowed.

• Remove leaf litter, brush and weeds at the edge of the lawn and around stonewalls and woodpiles.

• Move children's swing sets and sand boxes away from the woodland edge and place them on a woodchip or mulch foundation.

• Discourage rodent activity by cleaning up and sealing stonewalls and small openings around the home.

• Move firewood piles and bird feeders away from the house.

• Adopt hard landscape practices (using hard materials like stone and metals instead of soft materials like soil for planting).

Extra Tip: Keep your pets, particularly dogs, out of the woods and talk to your vet about tick repellents for your pets.

More information on Lyme disease plus ways to protect yourself, your children and your pets, is available from the Government of Canada at Canada.ca/LymeDisease.

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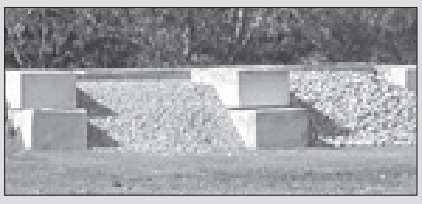



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1. Prepare dry rub.



2. Sprinkle dry rub liberally over the pork shoulder.



3. Wrap pork in plastic wrap. Refrigerate 12 hours.



4. Preheat oven to 220 degrees Fahrenheit.

Step into summer with this pulled pork classic

by Tim Wasylko

Here is a barbecue classic, and one of my favourite summer recipes – Spice Marinated Pulled Pork with Apple-Jack Barbecue Sauce

Let me start by saying that barbecue is a type of food, not what you're cooking that food on. This pulled pork recipe can be done on your gas grill, a smoker, or even in a household oven.

These days we see pulled pork everywhere, even in the fast food chains. You will find there are all kinds of theories on the best pulled pork – sometimes it's boiled or simmered, done in a crock-pot, or a Dutch oven. But the most moist and tasty pulled pork is done uncovered at a low temperature for an extended period of time – one day to marinade and one day to cook. It can be done in advance, and then reheated for your guests. It is not something that can be rushed.



Chef Tim Wasylko and his wife, Laura Fletcher.

I have included my basic dry rub and barbecue sauce recipe, and the instructions on how to make the best pulled pork. There is nothing better than homemade!

The basis behind a dry rub is balancing sweet and salty. To keep things simple, we will stay with just salts and sugars – we can save liquid flavouring for another time.

The first thing to consider is the ratio of salt to sugar. A higher salt ratio works best in rubs for beef, bison, fatty fish, and wild game, while those with more sugar are better suited for pork or more delicate flavoured meats.

Here are a few salt and sugar options:

Salt – Refined, fine grained

Kosher salt – Additive-free, coarse grained

Sea salt – From evaporated seawater; usually very fine grained

Maple Sugar – all natural

White sugar – refined cane or beet sugar; will burn at hotter temperatures

Brown sugar – White sugar combined with molasses; adds color and flavor to barbecue

Feel free to add what whatever you want or have on hand to your sugar/salt mix.

Here is one of my favourite combinations:

½ cup granulated maple sugar
½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup kosher salt
2 tbsp. ancho chili powder (or other chili powder you have available)
2 tbsp. garlic powder
1 tbsp. onion powder



5. You can do multiple roasts at a time on a large grill.

1 tbsp ground cinnamon
4 tbsp. smoked paprika (or regular if all that's available)
1 tsp. ground allspice
1 tbsp. ground cumin
½ tsp ground cloves

Mix all of the ingredients well. Store in an airtight container or zip lock bag.

For the pork, start with a fair sized pork shoulder roast, between 2.5 to 3.5 kilograms. Sprinkle your dry rub liberally over the pork shoulder.

Next, wrap the pork shoulder well in plastic wrap and put in the fridge for about 12 hours. Ensure there is a pan or something underneath in case the plastic leaks.

Now preheat whatever you are cooking it in to 220 degrees Fahrenheit. This will have to cook with indirect heat, so if it is a gas grill light only one side. If you are using a smoker, make sure the heat source is not directly underneath or that there is at least a heat deflector plate. If you are cooking in the oven, make sure it's on a rack in a pan deep enough to catch the drippings:

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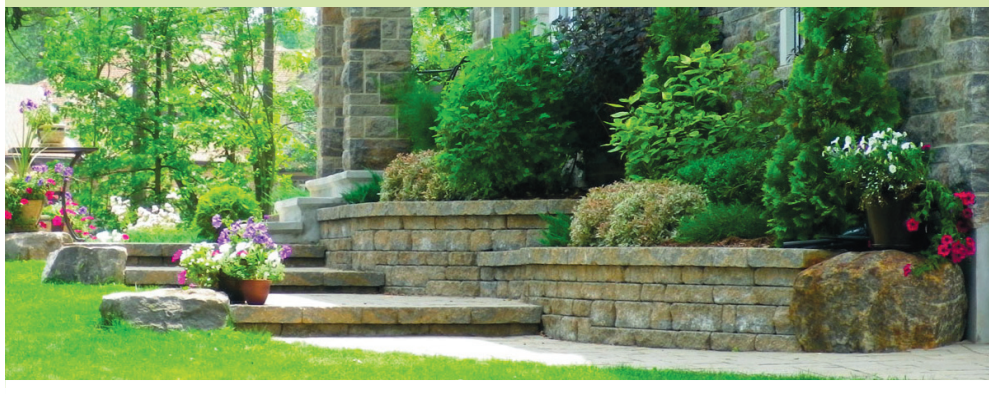





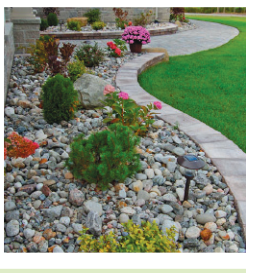

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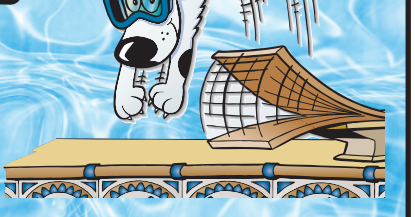

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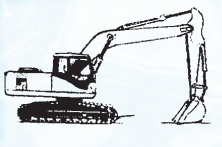

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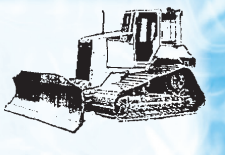

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Getting saucy

by Tim Wasylko

Everyone knows the thick, red coloured sauces found on the shelves of most grocery stores. Barbecue sauces come in a variety flavors, colours, and types.

However, there really is much more to barbecue sauce than the bottled ones.

I have been fortunate to travel a lot in my culinary career, and I have tasted all kinds of barbecue and barbecue sauces – from thin, vinegar sauces to thick, tomato based sauces to mustard based sauces, there is something for every kind of barbecue and for everyone.

Barbecue sauce is also about balancing flavours – acidity or tanginess, sweetness, spiciness, boldness. With that in mind, here is a great recipe for your pulled pork:

3.5 cups ketchup
1 medium onion, chopped (will be blended after)
6 rings dried apple coarsely chopped
1 tbsp. chopped garlic
2 tbsp. butter
2 oz. Jack Daniels
4 cups apple cider
3 tbsp. cider vinegar
2 tbsp. Worcestershire
1.5 tbsp. Dijon
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 tsp. ground allspice
1 tsp ground black pepper
Salt to taste
1 tsp. dried ancho chili powder (or whatever you have)
½ tbsp. dried thyme
1 cup water

In a medium sized pot, melt butter and cook onions until lightly browned. Add the remaining ingredients and let simmer for 40 minutes. Allow time to cool. Using a blender, puree until smooth. Taste for salt and pepper and season as required, return sauce to the pot and let simmer until desired thickness. It can be stored in an airtight container for up to two weeks or frozen in portions for up to six months.

Pulled pork classic

• continued from previous page

You can do multiple roasts at a time, depending on the size of your cooking appliance or grill.

Your pork needs to reach an internal temperature of 180 degrees Fahrenheit – and that's really the trick to perfect pulled pork. A good probe meat thermometer is very useful to ensure perfect cooking. Allow the pork shoulder to rest for approximately 30 minutes or until it is cool enough to handle. Pull off the big chunks of fat. Using your hands, or two forks, shred the pork, discarding any fatty or tough pieces. Toss the pork with hot barbecue sauce (recipe above), place on a warm bun and enjoy!

Bon appetite.

Chef Tim Wasylko and his wife, Laura Fletcher, own Winchelsea Events (www.thewinchelsea.com) on County Road 31 in Winchester. He is also the executive chef of 24 Sussex, the official residence to the Prime Minister of Canada.

Plant and rake without the ache

Winter takes a toll on your garden, but spring takes a toll on the gardener. It's true that gardening season and back pain often go hand in hand, but positioning your body correctly reduces the strain on muscles and joints. Use these tips to enjoy your garden to the fullest throughout the season:

• **Alternate your tasks.** Switch between heavy chores such as digging and lighter, less physically demanding tasks such as planting.

• **Do the "scissors" when you rake.** Stand with one leg forward and one leg back when you rake. Switch legs and hands every few minutes.

• **Kneel to plant and weed.** Constant bending can put strain on your back, neck, leg muscles, and joints, so kneeling is recommended. Use kneepads or a kneeling mat (with handles) to minimize the amount of bending required, and to make kneeling more comfortable. Keep your back straight.

• **Change positions frequently.** Make a point of changing position every 10 to 15 minutes. Move from kneeling to standing, from planting to digging.

• **Pace yourself.** A minimum of three brief breaks each hour is recommended. Take a few moments to move around, stretch your muscles, have a drink, or simply sit and relax. Spread the work over several days – you will still achieve the same great results.

More information on this topic is available at www.chiropractic.on.ca.

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