



Cross Pollination

April 2012

*The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
You know how it is with an April day.
- Robert Frost*



Spring is here!

Although we cannot say we struggled through a long and arduous winter, it is always a welcome feeling to find the spring has indeed arrived. Bird feeders are busy, nests are under construction and the pre-dawn air is filled with song. Time to plant a shovel, swing a rake and get things ready for a new year! No doubt many of you have already moved well beyond garden readiness as much garden life is well underway.

OUR AMAZING MEMBERS!



Our members were busy contributing the expertise of Master Gardeners at the recent Canada Blooms Event in March. Here are a few pictures that capture their outstanding commitment to our mission and a glimpse of the beauty of the week. Thanks so all who supported this event!



QUICK NEWS ITEMS

In follow-up to our discussion in March regarding the restoration of natural habitat by transplanting native plants, the harvesting of willow and dog wood will occur on April 11 around 5pm at a farm located at 11195 5th Line Nassagaweya Township, in Rockwood. If you would like further information you can contact David Hulsman of Field and Stream Rescue at 289-337-1565. Planting will take place on April 15th probably 10 am – 2 pm at Appleby and Mainway in Burlington.

Sarah Willis provided information about the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto has an exhibit on how people learned to cultivate plants, called "How Does My Garden Grow: the education of a gardener". It is offered from May-September this year and Master Gardeners may find it interesting. Here is a link with the pertinent details. <http://fisher.library.utoronto.ca/events-exhibits/upcoming-exhibitions>

"While the main focus is on historical material each of these sections will also make reference to modern examples, both British and Canadian, thereby demonstrating that all these modes of learning are as relevant today as they were in the past, and all have as their basis the love of plants and the universal human pleasure we take from them."

*The first day of spring is one thing, and the first spring day is another.
The difference between them is sometimes as great as a month. - Henry Van Dyke*

FROM OUR FRIENDS AT THE RBG!

Are you looking for new cultivars, rare finds, past favourites? You can ask advice from knowledgeable staff and well-known experts and enjoy a large selection of Iris and Hemerocallis from RBG's collection including cultivars that are no longer available from commercial growers. There is also added a larger selection of vegetables many of which are suited for containers.

The RBG Auxiliary is excited to share information with you about our 36th Annual Spring Plant Sale. As in previous years, our sale will be held at the end of the first week of May. This year the RBG has added an extra sale day with the hope that we will be able to attend and find that special treasure we've been searching for.

The sale dates are Thursday, May 3; from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Saturday, May 5; from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and Sunday, May 7; from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The sale is located at the Arboretum, Old Guelph Road in Dundas. RBG members will receive a 20% discount on purchases at the Spring Plant Sale. All prices include taxes and parking is free. For more information, call 905-577-7771 or visit www.rbg.ca and preview the plant list which will be available by mid-April.

MASTER GARDENER NEWS

It's Membership Time Again!

Now is the time to send in your membership dues. Please send your cheque made out to the Halton Region Master Gardeners for \$35.00 to Patty King at; 293 Pomona Ave., Burlington, Ontario L7N 1T2. You can bring your membership payment to the April Meeting.

Next Meeting

We will meet next on Wednesday, April 4th in rooms 3/4, starting at 7:15 pm. Our guest speaker will be Tom Bradley, a certified arborist and owner/operator of Welwyn Consulting and he will be speaking on trees.

Refreshment Reminder: Donna (snacks and napkins) and Maureen (beverages) Don't forget to lug a mug!

Remember to bring your loonies and toonies for this month's special draw. One item chosen by your new coordinator and will be on the draw table and up for grabs. All you need to do is guess the number of jelly beans in the jar to claim the winning ticket.

A Word about Peonies

One of my favourite flowers seems to bring me disappointment each spring since moving to Burlington, my peonies. In past, they were grown without thought, cut without mercy and then forgotten until the magic of the next year's bloom. But now I get all the right signals promising blooms, the buds arrive and then shrivel and die. So I've begun researching furiously to get it right this year!

Quite coincidentally, Sheila McCallum has offered us an informative newsletter item on her love for peonies, one in particular.

It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want - oh, you don't quite know what it is you do want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so! - Mark Twain

ITOH PEONY

Sheila McCallum

Over the years, I've tried growing herbaceous and tree peonies. Although the flowers are magnificent on these perennials, they could quickly be gone after a heavy rain or wind. I preferred the shorter herbaceous peonies that didn't need to be ring supported each year. (One of my favourite shorter varieties is "Sea Shell"). I had to wait a long time for the tree peony to mature in its glory of bloom and size. However, my general opinion of the peony changed when I was introduced to the Itoh Peony.

The Itoh peony is named after Toichi Itoh, who developed the hybrid by crossing a herbaceous peony with a tree peony about 60 years ago. American nurseries took the development further and the resulting intersectional shrub was introduced to market. I first heard about the Itoh peony in the local market about eight years ago. I "won" my Itoh peony from a grower a few years later. The initial price introduction was well over \$100 per plant. When I got my peony, the price tag had "dropped" to \$75 per plant. So what makes me go "ga,ga" over this plant that could warrant the price?

The Itoh peony carries all the best attributes of both the tree and herbaceous varieties. The plants are stronger; the blooms and green leaves stay longer; and the size and maturity of plant happen quicker than with a tree peony. Itoh peonies do require a minimum of six hours/day of sunlight. A bit of mildew can appear; albeit not serious and also quite late into the season. The erect flower blooms are huge and plentiful. My variety of Itoh peony, "Bartzella", is a show stopper. It is a yellow semi-double peony with a red centre. No wonder this variety won American Peony awards (Grand Champion 2002 and a Gold Medal in 2007). I can attest to the fact that the flowers remained on my plant after some very serious wind and rain storms last June. There were so many flowers on this plant, that it was hard to count the number. My plant stands about 3 1/2 feet high and equally as round now. It is located close to a blue dwarf spruce. The combination of these two colours is clearly visible a distance away.

If you haven't discovered this plant yet, treat yourself to a great garden performer.



Thank You
to Sheila
McCallum

Spring makes its own statement, so loud and clear that the gardener seems to be only one of the instruments, not the composer.

- Geoffrey B. Charlesworth



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April 2012...Section 2

As a new editor, I reserve the right to “mess up” my first publication! Please find the following wonderful article submitted by Joyce Killin!

My First Visit to the Philadelphia International Flower Show

March 4 -11, 2012

Three friends and I from the Royal Botanical Garden Auxiliary headed down to Philadelphia by car on a long, but interesting, drive of a bit under eight hours. It was a first for all of us however two of us had been to Chelsea and all of us to Canada Blooms. We were anxious to see what this world famous flower show was all about and compare.

The Philadelphia International Flower Show is the world’s largest and has been hosted by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society since 1829 just two years after the PHS was founded in 1827. It is the oldest Horticultural Society in the U.S.

All proceeds from the show go to the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society supporting their programs Urban Greening* and City Harvest a network of community gardeners and other partners that helps feed 1,000 families each week during the growing season.

It is a large organization with many thousands of volunteers, plus members and staff. Most of their work is done in partnerships with others where they garner volunteer. In earlier years many of the big estates in the area would send their gardeners with the best plants for the show and this tradition continues today although there are fewer large estates left. One director told us we would see Mrs Brown’s name mentioned on many of the plants on display as she had a number of entries in the Horticultural section.

A grand entrance was our first experience as we entered the show. By using the latest technology to create a spectacular overhead projection engulfing you in moving images of ocean surf and waves, this high definition video mapping projection of a virtual wave of water building up over a brilliant bank of white Anthuriums and Orchids which then dissolved into foamy crests of orchids, with the sound of the ocean, we were welcomed. Embraced by a Hawaiian ambiance as the theme of this year’s show was Hawaii - Islands of Aloha. The effect was truly magical and did transport you to these tropical islands.

From here we were led by the crowd to the first of the Showcase Gardens, an immense 28 foot tall waterfall crashing down into a 30 foot wide pool featuring stunning orchids of every shape, size and colour, tropical foliage, and ferns dripping overhead. A traditional thatched-roof house, erupting volcanoes and a stage featuring professional hula dancers again using visual effects evoking an artful tribute to Pele, the Fire Goddess. It was incredible.

We attended the show on the second day and arrived at 10 am as we were excited and anxious to get there. However this is the best (or worst) time for crowds and the show had 30,000 people on opening day. Too late, we were told that around 5 o’clock and the dinner hour one can enjoy the show with only a few hundred people. We soon moved on away from the crowds and found the Horticulture section which was much quieter and a joy to see.

The Horticultural section was a real highlight of the show with a huge number of classes of plants on display, all in perfect bloom and condition with each being judged and ranked. There were every type of cacti and succulents,

every imaginable bulb in bloom, Begonias, Clivia, including the variegated and yellow ones, delightful miniature gardens and trough gardens, venerable plants (over 20 years old). Each plant was obviously lovingly tended. Here one could spend hours as it is definitely a plant lover's paradise.

Like everywhere else the Philadelphia Flower Show was emphasizing green. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Societies' own exhibit offered innovative vertical vegetable growing techniques and how edibles can beautify the home garden were highlighted this year. A 9-foot-high and 40-foot-long wall of 3,000 leafy heads of 6 different varieties of lettuce was spectacular. It was very tempting to graze but of course this was discouraged.

Excellent displays of raised beds overflowing with vegetables, cold frames, wall shelves, and wall mounted containers offered inspiration for the vegetable gardener. Cherry tomatoes growing on an overhead trellis demonstrated the use of a growing system suspended in the air instead of in the ground. An innovative fragrant wall of herbs constructed mainly of reclaimed and repurposed wood was a fragrant and delightful touch.

Floral Displays and ongoing floral arrangements judged by the audience were in another area. Floral arrangements from all over were on display. Here also were the miniature and delicate floral displays situated behind glass so we could get up close for viewing. Some were smaller than thimbles.

In an out of the way area of the show there was the Hawaiian Village showcasing the authentic crafts and products from Hawaii, and ongoing live performances of hula dancers and traditional music of the islands. I am sure many people missed this area but it was well worth a visit.

Of course there is a Market Place where numerous vendors sold their wares and of course we did spend some time here for souvenirs.

We passed on the Gardening lectures and demonstrations as there just was not enough time plus we did not see any that were of real interest.

My favourite areas were definitely the Horticultural section and the vegetable exhibits.

So was the Philadelphia International Flower Show up to snuff in comparison with Chelsea and Canada Blooms? Well in my mind Chelsea still wins top place. I would definitely go to the Philadelphia Flower Show again and spend more time in the city as it is beautiful and full of history, as well as, the other public gardens nearby. Within driving from Philadelphia are Chanticleer, Winterthur and Longwood. We did spend a day at Longwood this time and spent most of our time in the four acre conservatory. It is magnificent.

**promotes a comprehensive approach to revitalizing and maintaining the city's green infrastructure as a key element in urban renewal. Philadelphia Green puts this approach into action by partnering with local residents, community groups, government and businesses.*

Reference:

2012 Philadelphia International Flower Show, Official Schedule of Events

By the by...

Congratulation Joyce! I thoroughly enjoyed a beautiful glimpse of the magic you work in your garden as profiled in the Winter 2011-12 Edition of Gardenmaking Magazine, Volume 8. "An Urban Hideaway" is aptly titled, a delightful piece! MG's can check 'GARDENMAKING.COM' or take a look at the magazine this week at our meeting...I'll bring it with me.