



Cross Pollination

April 2008 – Volume 56

Coordinator's Corner

Winter may finally be coming to an end. Our rose covers are now half exposed above the snow and some grass has appeared in the centre of the lawn. Of course, at the edge of the grass and snow line, snow mould has started to appear. A brisk raking with the leaf rake took care of the first few patches but one must be vigilant until all the snow has melted. The heavy snowfall this winter combined with the slow melt should help to raise the water level in the lakes and the water table.

The location of the Master Gardeners information booth at Canada Blooms was excellent. All visitors to the show had to pass by the booth. The 'Ask The Experts' panel, held each day at noon was well received. The merchant's mall was disappointing. There were fewer vendors with garden products and several tour operators spread out in the area to give the impression that the space was filled.

The Hamilton & Burlington Rose Society will be hosting **The All-Canadian Rose Show** this year on June 21 & 22. The show, a first of its kind, is an exhibition of Canada bred roses. Over 700 roses have been bred by 86 Canadian hybridizers. If you have Canadian roses in your garden then come and exhibit in the show. If you don't have Canadian roses then come anyway!

As indicated in the March 5, 2008 Minutes, the membership fee for this year is \$20. If you haven't paid, please pay at the April meeting or send a cheque to our treasurer, Patty King. We have to submit the list of members to MGOI by the end of April.

Lorne Sparrow

Dates to Note



Oakville Master Gardeners

Landscape design with Sean James

April 5 \$75

To register, Contact Linda Brentnall
905-257-2442

Ontario Garden Show RBG

April 17 - 20

RBG Plant Sale RBG Arboretum

May 1 and 3

BBQ

June 8 Georgetown

Next meeting

*Wednesday May 7, 2008 7:30 p.m.
Rooms 3 & 4*

As promised, here are some lovely photographs from Donna Parker's trip to China:



More photo's follow on Page 5

Saskatoon Berry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), by Karen Walsh



Family: Rosaceae

Genus: *Amelanchier*

Species: ***A. alnifolia***

The alder-leaved Serviceberry is also called the Saskatoon Berry or "Sarvice" berry. Saskatoon berries are quickly emerging as a new cultivated fruit domesticated from wild plants found on the prairies. The Saskatoon is a small to large shrub, or small tree, which belongs to the Rose family. It is closely related to the apple, hawthorn and mountain ash. The Saskatoon is a perennial, woody, fruit bearing shrub which is capable to adapting to a wide range of soils and climatic conditions. The Saskatoon is hardy to -50 to -60 degrees Celsius. Flowering occurs in early May to early June and berries are ready to pick the beginning to mid July.

The Saskatoon berry was an important food source for both indigenous peoples and the early pioneers. Pemmican was flavored by Saskatoon berries in combination with dried meats by the indigenous peoples of the prairie provinces. The Saskatoon berry is an important food source for wildlife during the winter. Today Saskatoon berries are used in a wide variety of ways from pies, jams, jellies, syrups, wine, liqueurs and flavor concentrates. They may be used fresh and freeze very well or may be dried and used for cereals, trail mix and snack foods.

There are older varieties on the market – Pembina and Smokey. Smoky is the most widely grown Saskatoon cultivar primarily as it was the first cultivar available in large quantities. Newer varieties include Honeywood, Moon Lake and Thiessen. I have two Thiessen and one Smokey in my garden. Saskatoon shrubs tend to sucker so they need to be planted where there is plenty of room. They are excellent at the edge of a wood or along a moist stream or river bank. Weed control in a Saskatoon berry patch is essential. If weeds are not controlled during the early stages of patch or orchard establishment then the future viability of the bushes is affected. Young plants are not good competitors with weeds. Saskatoon berry bushes do not tolerate drought (usually natural rainfall is adequate except in drought years) or pollution. They are susceptible to many problems that also bother the rose family – Berry spot, Juniper Rust, canker, Black leaf, powdery mildew and fire blight. Using a dormant oil/sulphur treatment in the late winter or early spring helps to fend off most of the diseases. What you can't fend off are the birds – if you want a harvest then the shrubs will have to be covered with nets after the fruit set.

Pruning is an important consideration in a Saskatoon patch because if the shrubs do not receive proper pruning and maintenance they will have a shorter useful life expectancy.

In summary “the cultivation of native fruit species, including the Saskatoon, could significantly contribute to the diversification and health of the prairie agricultural economy by enhancing alternative agricultural production, by promoting the development of mixed farming operations, by providing a more substantive base for a processing industry, and by enhancing our connections with native prairie ecosystems through the use of native plant species.”

Watch for recipes in next month's issue . . .

