



Cross Pollination

May 2009

Coordinator's Corner

Please do walk on the Grass!

Spring is finally here and the grass is greening up nicely! The local paper is full of questions and concerns about the cosmetic pesticide ban. Is it politically or scientifically motivated? Is it too much, too soon or too late and too little? Perhaps in all this debate, we lose sight of the reason we grow plants in the first place. The following (slightly adapted) Internet story struck a chord in me. I thought that it must be one of the greatest testaments ever to the power of horticultural therapy.

Once upon a time, there was a Canadian soldier stationed in Afghanistan; essentially he was stationed in a big sand box -not many plants. He asked his wife to send him some Canadian soil and some grass seed so that he could have the sweet aroma and the feel of grass beneath his feet. He prepared the bed, sowed the seed and tended it daily. As the lawn grew, he gently trimmed it using a pair of army issue scissors. But this lawn had a greater purpose than just looking good. When the men of the squadron had a mission that they were going on, they took turns walking through the grass and the Canadian soil - to bring them good luck! Here's hoping it works and all our Canadian soldiers live happily ever after to return home to their families and their gardens.



What could be better than feeling cool green grass between your toes? What is the point of a lawn with dire warnings signs to avoid all contact? Plants are about connecting to the soil and the living planet we all share, not about perfection.

Claudette Sims

Halton Region

Master Gardener Meetings

7:00 p.m. RBG - Rooms 3 & 4



Please bring something for the draw table and change to buy tickets - \$2.00 each or 3 for \$5.00

- May 6 – **Greening your backyard** (Stacey Hickman)

Other Garden-Worthy Dates

- **RBG Tulip Celebration**

Saturdays and Sundays,

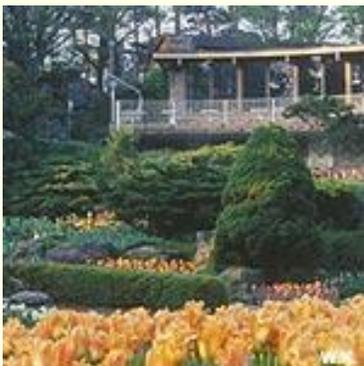
May 2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 18

- **RBG Auxiliary Plant Sale**

Thursday, May 7 and Saturday, May 9

- **Oakville Hort Society Plant Sale**

May 9



RBG

You know you're A Master Gardener when:

10. You rejoice in rain...even after 10 straight days of it.
9. You have pride in how bad your hands look.
8. You have a decorative compost container on your kitchen counter.
7. You can give away plants easily, but compost is another thing.
6. Soil test results actually mean something.
5. IPM rules!
4. You'd rather go to a nursery to shop than a clothes store.
3. You look for gardens open to the public whenever you go on vacation.
2. Your non-gardening spouse is actually getting involved with your garden endeavours...digging ponds, building bird houses, watering, pruning, turning compost piles, planting...

And you definitely know you're a Master Gardener when...

1. You are surrounded by terrific people who share your passion!

Created by [Audrey](#), Emmitsburg, Md.

Submitted by Jess Cronin



The Sustainable Vegetable Garden
A Backyard Guide to Healthy Soil and Higher Yields
by John Jeavons & Carol Cox
Reviewed by Donna Parker

If you attended the January Tech Update hosted by Toronto Master Gardeners you may remember the talk on Biointensive Gardening. John Jeavons' first book, 'How to Grow More Vegetables' provided the basis of that presentation.

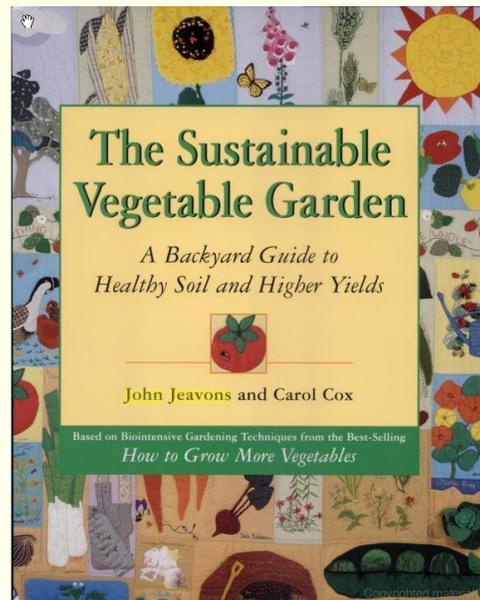
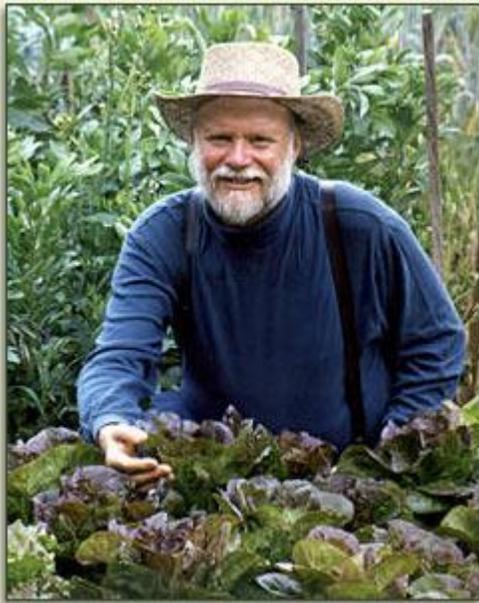
This book, which follows from more than 20 years of the Ecology Action Food-growing movement, is an attempt to streamline the information and make it accessible even for beginning gardeners.

The focus is on creating "living soil" which is constantly nourished and replenished. The authors cover, in detail, the topics of: Composting, Bed preparation using the "double digging" method, planning and planting, care of seedlings and companion planting of "calorie" and "carbon" crops to increase yield and replenish the soil.

The current upswing in public interest in vegetable gardening led me to this book as a possible resource for novice gardeners. In many ways it provides that resource -- it is short (100 pages) and contains many diagrams and charts and offers step-by-step instructions. In other ways it is very technical. Experienced growers of vegetables will find sufficient detail to involve them in the science of biointensive gardening.

In our garden advice clinics, we shape our information and resources to suit the limited time and attention of public situations. This book is not a resource for the advice clinic. Those gardeners who have begun to re-think the "double digging" method of bed preparation will not find support here.

The book's target -- the novice gardener -- will, I think, still find the book a bit daunting. However, it does provide an excellent instructional manual for the serious home gardener who wants to increase crop yields while preserving and enriching their backyard environment.



How to build a Hens 'n Chicks Shadow Box By Claudette Sims

At a recent MG event, a visitor approached our table and asked a question about hens 'n chicks. I described how he could build this shadow box and Dot asked me to submit it for the newsletter . . .

Materials

- Old picture frame
- 1 x 6 cedar lumber
- Chicken wire
- Soil
- Hardy succulent plants (hens and chicks, sedum etc)
- 2 x 2 cedar for shelf support

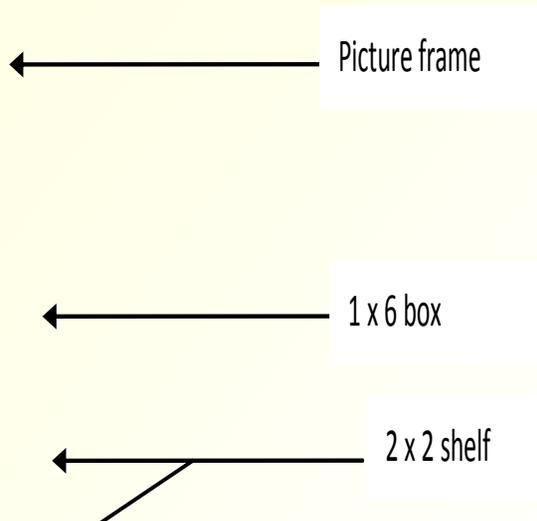
Construction

- Cut 1 x 6 lumber into 4 pieces to fit the dimensions of the frame and nail together to form a box.
- Cut enough 1 x 6 to cover the bottom of the box and nail together.
- Drill 1 inch holes in the top of the box to allow you to water the plants.
- Nail the 1 x 6 box to the picture frame.
- Fill with good quality soil appropriate for succulents.
- Staple chicken wire over the front of the picture frame.
- Cut holes in the chicken wire in order to make enough room to insert plants. Bend the wire back to keep plants in.
- Leave the picture frame upright (facing the sky) until the plants have taken root and will stay in place.
- Using the 2 x 2 cedar, build a support strong enough to hold the box and plants. (see photo)
- Place the shadow box on the support shelf.

Care

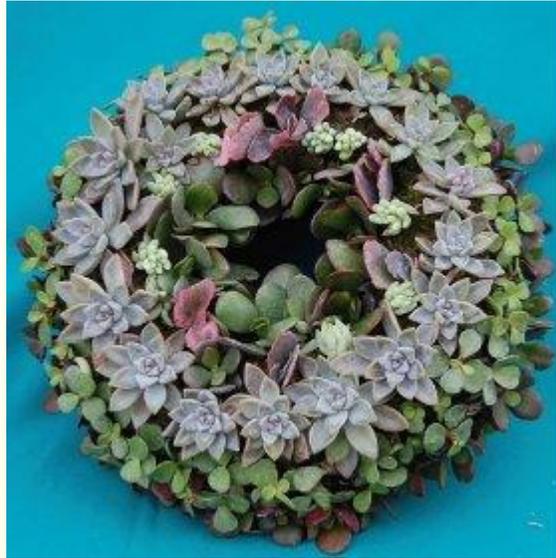
- Position the box so that the plants get plenty of sun.
- Water the plants though the holes at the top of the box when needed.
- Replace plants and soil as needed.

My plants have survived many winters quite nicely on the fence.



How to make a succulent wreath - http://www.ehow.com/how_15263_make-living-succulent.html

This follows from Claudette's article – a similar project is included in this month's Womans Day magazine.



Succulents such as jade, hens-and-chicks, donkey's tail and rosette-forming crassula all grow well from cuttings. By placing these cuttings into a sphagnum-wrapped wreath frame, you can create a living patio centre piece that will grow and last for many years.

1. Prepare succulent cuttings by taking pieces of established plants a few days prior to building your wreath. (A shopping bag full of cuttings should be enough to make an 8-inch wreath.) The cuttings should be at least 3 inches long. Allow them to dry for a few days to form a scab on the cut end.
2. Attach the tag end of #24 paddle wire to a wire wreath frame.
3. Soak sphagnum moss in a bucket until it is moist. Half a bale of sphagnum will make one 8-inch living wreath
4. Cover the wreath frame with the sphagnum moss. The brown side of the moss should face up and the sides should overlap by at least 2 inches on both sides of the frame.
5. Dip the cut end of a succulent cutting into a rooting hormone.
6. Lay the prepared succulent cutting onto the moss-covered frame near where the wire is attached. The cutting should lie on its side.
7. Cover the cut end of the succulent with a new piece of damp moss. Wrap the overlapped moss over the new piece of moss to cover the end.
8. Wrap twice with the paddle wire. Be very careful when wrapping the wire around the stem of the cutting. If you wrap too tightly, the wire will cut into the tender flesh of the succulent.
9. Continue adding cuttings, covering with moss and wrapping with wire until you come to the end. Cut the wire and tie off to the back of the frame.
10. Soak the finished wreath in a bucket or water with a hose to settle plants in place.