

Cross Pollination

Time and Tolerance in the Garden

Gardening with David Marshall



An article in the New York Times by David Brooks reported on studies indicating the happiest age group is people aged between 82 and 85.

When assessing their own well-being, people in their twenties rated themselves highly – middle-age bottomed at around 50 -- and then happiness rose until between 82 and 85 our happiness exceeded that of the youngsters.

Psychologists, who have a theory for everything, say that this is due to changes in the brain. Older people are more relaxed because they are spared the burden of thinking about the future, so they get more pleasure from day to day activities. Middle age people are confronted by unsurmountable problems such as rebellious teenagers, mortgages, and job stresses, whereas older people can choose their challenges, ignore the inconvenient ones, and take a more relaxed view of life.

I choose to believe that gardeners know our happiness is because we have become more tolerant of weeds which in our younger days drove us to distraction. In the olden days I was guilty of the eighth deadly sin of weed intolerance,

and have even been known to spray them with (GASP) Killex, Round Up, and other nasties.

Now I have a more benign arsenal, consisting of a Lee Valley border fork, a flat tined hand fork; (why are good ones so hard to find?), a Lee Valley perennial knife, a hoe with a stainless steel blade insert which I keep sharp, sharp, sharp, a carbide tipped laminate cutter, occasionally a propane weed torch, and pine or cedar shredded bark mulch.



The secret of using these low tech tools is to use them at least once a week. I must confess that despite my best intentions, and even New Year's resolutions, I am basically undisciplined and while I can provide this advice, I often miss the mark on timing.

If you insist on using chemicals you can use corn gluten meal as a pre-emergent weed control, though its results are spotty and it does nothing for existing weeds. Weed Be Gone kills broad leafed weeds by overdosing them with iron. On your driveway or patio you can legally use Path Clear, which is simply 6.25 percent acetic acid, or vinegar. This is virtually the same as pickling vinegar which is 7 percent at a

fraction of the price, but I can't advise you to use this because it is not labelled under the Pesticide Act as a weed killer!

Now, back to my personal preference for low tech weed arsenal. You can hand pull most weeds but without preparation, but you risk missing the root. For large clumps of weeds I hold the border fork at its balance point on the shaft, ram it under the roots, and lever up. This loosens the roots, and the whole weed can be pulled with the other hand and composted if they have not gone to seed. For smaller weeds or close quarters I use the hand fork. Smaller weeds I just hoe up and leave them to die. In the lawn I push the perennial knife deep alongside the weed and cut it off. I know that they can sometimes grow back, but it takes a long time. I have not had much success with those expensive claw devices which you step on and lever up. I seem to miss the weed as often as I grab it!

For my interlock driveway and patio I simply draw the laminate cutter along the joint and sweep up the debris. It is surprisingly quick once you get the technique right, and as quick as torching which still leaves the dead weed in place.

I am still a couple of years away from that magic age of 82, but I can already feel the blissful state coming on, and if I reach 85, I probably won't even recognise a weed.

NIRVANA!

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Newsletter of the Halton
Master Gardeners

Website:

<http://haltonmastergardeners.wordpress.com>

April TO DO List

- ◇ Apply dormant oil sprays or lime sulphur when temperatures permit – follow the label instructions.
- ◇ Tuck frost heaved plants back into place.
- ◇ Sprinkle blood meal around emerging tulips to deter animals.
- ◇ Rake lawn and clean debris from garden beds.
- ◇ Top dress lawn with .5 inch (2 cm) fine textured compost.
- ◇ Divide or transplant perennials as growth resumes.
- ◇ Put out yarn holders for bird nesting material.

Master Gardeners of Halton

Email Help Line: haltonmastergardeners@gmail.com



Where to Find Master Gardeners for Advice

We will be available at the Oakville Home Show, Glen Abbey Recreation Centre, 3rd Line, April 10 to 12, 2015

Halton Master Gardeners Speakers List

Join us for our monthly speakers held at the Royal Botanical Gardens at 7:15 p.m., first Wednesday of the month.

Contact: Patty King at a_p@cogeco.ca Please note a \$5.00 fee covers speakers and refreshments.

Dew of the Sea or Rosemary

By the Garden Goddess, aka Christine Says (not a herbalist)

Rosmarinus officinalis better known as the herb Rosemary, is a member of the mint family and was brought to England by the Romans. It quickly spread throughout Europe and eventually over to The 'New World'.

A woody perennial, very fragrant, with 1" needles and narrow form, Rosemary produces small blue flowers early in summer. This plant requires well drained alkaline soil, a sunny position with protection from winds. Grow Rosemary from stem cuttings as seeds take about 6 months to germinate. And who can wait that long, not me or the lamb!

Use Rosemary in salads, soups and baked vegetables. It can also be used to flavour pork, chicken, lamb and shellfish. You are advised to add the herb at the last moment in cooking to help retain its flavour. However, if I was barbecuing I would add it from the start.



Now, as to growing it indoors throughout the winter, it is not easy. You will need a cool sunny room, lucky me I have one. This may be difficult for some people, but persevere.

Stand your Rosemary in a saucer but elevated on large pebbles. As the water evaporates it provides a micro-climate and higher humidity. Feed your Rosemary plant with organic plant food weekly throughout the growing season, and then monthly from March to October. I have only fed my Rosemary rarely, but it didn't get upset and we are still friends.

What does Rosemary contain? Quite a lot actually. It is rich in many B-complex vitamins, also vitamins A and C, plus minerals and iron. Additional health benefits include essential acids, and it has antiseptic qualities and is an antioxidant as well.

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