

Cross Pollination

Spring Garden Tips

By Marg Catley



Gardening season will soon be in full swing. Here are some suggestions to make your chores easier and more enjoyable.

1. Digging a new bed is back-breaking. Instead, lay a thick covering of newspapers over the area, pile on 12-18 inches of good loam and plant your bed. The grass and paper decompose in eight weeks and the bed settles to about half its height while you enjoy your plants.
2. Save the thorny branches pruned from rose bushes and lay them in your flower beds to deter cats and squirrels. Anchor them into the ground and as the plants grow, the branches are hidden.
3. Prune early-flowering shrubs and use the clippings as stakes for container tomatoes. The plants soon cover the branches and some may even root

- during the summer giving you a bonus shrub.
4. Put peony rings in place before your plants start to flop. Set out stakes and netting for climbing plants or vines when you put out the seeds or plants.
5. Don't remove the name tags from clematis (or keep them on file) as different varieties require different pruning times.
6. Dig a trench rather than individual holes when putting in a hedge.

- and wood containers by lining them with plastic garbage bags. Be sure to cut a drainage hole in the bottom. Mulch exposed soil.
9. Get a small tarp for dragging heavy bags. It is easier than lifting them into a wheel barrow.
10. Save time and energy by leaving grass clippings on the lawn. They recycle into plant food.



And finally, some age-old practices our ancestors followed planting by the moon's cycles:

- This provides uniformity of water requirements and results in a better mature hedge. Two or three prunings per season promote branching and denser growth. Remember the base of the hedge should be wider than the top.
7. Rhododendrons are shallow-rooted. Top dress the area with a mixture of oak leaves, pine needles and peat moss to maintain soil acidity.
 8. Drought-proof your terra-cotta

1. Plants that put on most of their growth above ground (such as fruit and annuals) can be planted any time from new moon to full (waxing) moon; and
2. Plants that rely on underground storage systems (bulbs, tubers, biennials and perennials) should be planted from full moon to the last quarter (waning) moon.
3. The optimum time to weed: the last quarter to the new moon when plant growth is at its lowest.

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Newsletter of the Halton
Master Gardeners

Website:

<http://haltonmastergardeners.wordpress.com>

May TO DO List

- Rake lawn to remove leaves and thatch; spread a thin layer of compost on lawn; wait until you see the buds on the lilacs before over-seeding! Service lawn mower
- Garden beds: gently remove leaves and cut back dead stems of perennials; cut back tall grasses
- Prune shrubs, trees and vines of damaged, dead, diseased branches; prune to size where needed
- Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs i.e. lilac, crab apple after flowering
- Transplant shrubs and perennials on cool days, and hopefully before leaves come out
- Wait until May 24 before planting tender vegetables such as tomatoes
- Plant cool weather plants such as pansies, ranunculus
- Sow cool weather seeds such as sweet peas, cabbage, leeks, radishes

Master Gardeners of Halton

Email Help Line: haltonmastergardeners@gmail.com



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.

Learn how to Prune Roses from Lorne Sparrow, May 6, 2015.

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

Plant Sale for a Good Cause: David Marshall is having a perennial plant sale the first two weekends in May, 8.30 to 4.30 in his driveway at 2039 Rebecca St. Oakville. (just West of Third Line) Over 40 varieties with a 10% discount for Halton M.G.'s

He is raising funds for his granddaughter who is going to Kenya next March with Craig Kielberger's **Me to We**. She has to raise over \$4000 for her expenses, and that's a lot of babysitting for a fifteen year old. Y'all come now!

The Herb Corner – Thyme

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

Now Thyme has many attributes, for example you can walk on it as a ground cover, use it in cooking and it is also used to treat various ailments. It is quite a powerful little evergreen herb that grows either as a creeper or in mounds. It also comes in various heights and colours.

Let us start in the kitchen: Use it in bean, egg and vegetable dishes. Thyme brings out the flavour of meat. Try it in pasta, I never thought of using it in pasta. Use the lemon thyme in salads.

In the Garden: Thyme as a ground cover does away with grass and smells good. There are so many varieties. I favour Minus so small you would think it was a moss, 1" high and dense. Then there is the lemon type very scented and has a mounding growth habit. In fact there appears to be all the citreous types, orange and lime also. The woolly thyme makes a very attractive grey carpet.



Medicinal: Thyme has antibacterial properties and is a very powerful oxidant. The volatile oils in thyme helps the brain and increases omega-3 fatty acids which also helps to keep cells healthy and helps to slow down the ageing process.

It also treats diarrhoea and bowel infections! Drink a cup of thyme for coughs, sore throats or for a congested chest. (How much thyme one needs for the tea I have no idea, you will have to do your own research on that one.)

Habitat: Poor soil, hot and dry and it needs little care. Thyme comes from Asia and has been cultivated in Europe and North America. Depending on the variety the flowers can be mauve, pink, shades of lavender or white.