

Gardening News

Those friendly and informative **Master Gardeners** will be holding **question and answer clinics** again at the nursery on Sundays through April and into May. They will be pleased to assist you and answer questions from 1:00 to 4:00 on the following Sundays: April 10, 17, 24 and May 1st.

Victoria Flower & Garden Festival dates to mark in your calendar. The show is over five days this time, from 28 July through 1 August, and will be held mainly at Topaz Park in Victoria as well as at a few other locations.

Classes will resume in June. The **class schedule will only be sent out by email bulletin in early June.** If we don't have a current email address for you, could we ask you to take a moment to send us a quick note to russellnursery@telus.net In this way you will be sure to get the class

schedule when we send it out.

It's **time to fertilize** again, if you have not already done so. **Acer 20-10-10** is available in 4, 8 and 20 kg bags, and is the all purpose fertilizer we recommend first. It releases slowly over a 5 to 7 month period, so a single application in the spring is all you need for the year. It is the same fertilizer we use on all our plants here at the nursery.

A **warm welcome back** to Emma Taylor who rejoins our staff full time this spring. She will be looking after the perennial section. We are very pleased to have her on board.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? We'd love to hear from you. Our email address is russellnursery@telus.net or you can send mail to Russell Nursery, 1370 Wain Rd., North Saanich, BC V8L 5V1 or you can phone or fax us at 656-0384.

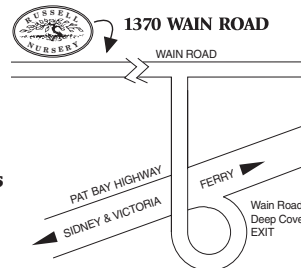
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Spring 2005 GARDENING NEWS

More Timeless Gardening Tips from Fellow Gardeners

compiled by Brian Russell

Some pearls of hard-won gardening wisdom from local gardeners, designers and horticultural professionals. Our thanks to all who contributed.

“When you next have time to spend in the garden, get out there and do nothing at all. Take in all of those lovely nuances which may elude us when we move too quickly. If you're in the mood to get busy: mulch, harvest or pull a few weeds. Prune or dig only if you must.” - Chris Kennedy

“To strive for a garden that is interesting and beautiful year-round, visit your local nurseries every three or four weeks for plant material inspiration. Nurseries constantly have new stock on display, which will allow you to see what is in bloom and provide you with good ideas for your own gardening projects.” - Lily Maxwell

“Keep in mind when designing a new area of your garden, the saying “Less is More.” Limiting your colour palette (ie, using a monochromatic scheme or only two or three colours like white, blue, and yellow) choosing key plants, and repeating their usage will result in a more satisfying, cohesive, and often dramatic finished product.” - Lily Maxwell

“When transplanting shrubs that are infested with weeds, soak the root ball in a

wheelbarrow full of water to loosen all the soil and weed roots. Remove infested soil and carefully replant as you would a bare root shrub.” - Stephan Cranz

“Don't fight the site. Every garden has a distinct micro climate and working with yours instead of trying to combat it will save time, energy and money. It takes discipline to say no to a much desired plant, but one can always find a suitable substitute that is the right plant for the right place.” - Joan Gibb

“Look ahead 10 years. If you are starting with a blank slate and planting trees and shrubs, try to visualize their height, width and relationship to each other in ten years. Careful planning will save hard work and heartache when overgrown plant material no longer fits the site and must be removed. Ask a professional for advice if you are unsure of growth habits.” - Joan Gibb

“Using plants with plum coloured foliage (such as Cotinus “Royal Purple” or Heuchera “Pewter Moon”) can form a bridge between warm coloured and cool coloured flowers in the garden because they contain elements of both - warm red and cool blue.”

- Alison Sproule

“When regularly trimming a broadleaved evergreen hedge (boxwood, laurel etc) take the time every couple of years to thin out some inner branches after the shearing to increase light and air circulation. If you don't, the overall condition of the hedge will weaken over time.” - Alison Sproule

“When planning out your new borders remember to repeat, repeat, repeat... repetition

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in colour, form, shape and texture makes for a much more inviting and interesting garden space... try cutting your list of desired plants in half and then bulking up on their numbers instead." - Lorraine Hamilton

"Don't forget green is a colour too!"
- Lorraine Hamilton

"Make note to self: where bulbs are, what colour, and where you would like to add more. This will enable you to plan the perfect spring show, complementing flowering shrubs and evergreens for next year."
- Catherine Turk

The Skinny on Screening

by Susan Tice

Many of the planting problems we are asked to solve relate to screening of some kind. The challenge may be to disguise the new monster house next door or to block an unsightly view of the neighbour's RV/ garage/ new deck/ junk pile. Sometimes it's to cover up a large expanse of empty wall or fence. It could just be to provide a visual barrier against passers by, or to define a property line. Whatever the reason, there is often very little space and the trick is to find plants that will do the job without taking up half the garden.

Tall and Slim: When planting near the property line, it's prudent to choose plants that won't spread too wide. Deciduous trees like *Acer rubrum* 'Scanlon', *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson Sentry' or 'Columnare', *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' and *Carpinus* 'Franz Fontaine' are narrow and grow to between 20 and 35 feet. They are all a good height to start with and won't become too large over time. While evergreen may seem more desirable, these trees will become quite twiggy with age and provide a good screen, even in the winter. Evergreen trees that would be suitable include *Eucryphia*, *Thuja* 'Smaragd', *Picea omorika*, *Cupressus x leylandii* 'Emerald Isle' (NOT the straight species), Italian Cypress and *Taxus baccata* varieties. Large growing cedars and firs should not be used

Sue's Gardening Maxims: 1) Keep it simple. 2) Plant the plants that please you personally, so the garden is unique to you. 3) Choose plant material that has beauty in more than one season. 4) Avoid too many different varieties of plants. 5) Develop a theme before you start. Dream the garden before you ever put a spade into the ground. 6) Be prepared to keep your plants watered regularly, especially at first while they are getting established. - Sue Beckley

"Don't tie your dog to the wheelbarrow."
- Colin Sykes

in small spaces. It may seem like a good idea at the time, but...you may later regret it.

Short and Slight: *Nandina domestica*, *Euonymus* 'Silver Queen' or 'Silver King', *Osmanthus delavayi*, *Taxus baccata* 'Melford' and *Ilex* 'Sky Sentry' all have a naturally columnar habit and will grow to between 4 and 8 feet.

Up Against the Wall: There are lots of options for covering a big, empty wall. If it is OK to allow a plant to cling to the surface then try a climbing hydrangea, Boston ivy or Virginia creeper. You'll have a lush, leafy covering in no time. (FYI- it does take time for these to get going, but once they do they take off)

If a support structure of some kind is possible, then try an espalier. The term espalier applies to any plant trained into and grown in a two dimensional pattern. They can be grown against a wall or fence or be free standing to act as a living fence. Originally grown in Europe's medieval walled towns, espaliers were used during long sieges as a method for growing lots of fruit in a small area. Many ornamental shrubs take well to being grown like this. For example: Flowering Quince, Japanese Maples, Witch Hazel, *Pyracantha*, *Cotoneaster*, Crabapple, *Forcythia*, Magnolias, *Fremontodendron*, *Camellia sasanqua*, *Sarcococca*.

There are also shrubs that can be grown without support against a wall. Plant them

close to but not right against the wall and keep them in their allotted space with pruning. This results in a plant that is more three dimensional than two, but still very narrow. Wall-trained shrubs are really useful in tight spaces like those between two houses, for instance, or in those narrow beds between walls and sidewalks. Often a cascading effect results with a good display of foliage and flowers. Shrubs that take a lot of pruning are well suited to this type of treatment. *Lonicera nitida*, *Pyracantha*, *Escallonia*, *Ceanothus*, *Osmanthus* and Bay laurel would all work. How to accomplish these effects is the subject of a whole other article, but we have information at the nursery for anyone who is interested.

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: Screening that is required only in the summer can be accomplished to great effect with tall, narrow grasses and perennials. *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster' and 'Overdam' grow to 5 feet and hold their shape all season. *Miscanthus floridus* grows an impressive 10 - 12 feet by early summer. Many of the other

Planting in Dry Shade

by Nursery Staff

Here on the West Coast many of us have large cedar and fir trees and the dry conditions they create provide a real challenge for gardeners. Their roots are vigorous and use up most of the available moisture, while their canopies act like umbrellas and keep the rain from penetrating to the ground. The challenges of growing a garden in these dry, shady conditions can be overcome in a variety of ways. Mimicking nature is always a safe bet. *Mabonia nervosa*, Red Huckleberry, Salal, Sword Fern, Snowberry, Fringecup and *Rosa gymnocarpa* are great choices for naturalizing your landscape and need little care.

If you're up for a little more work, it would be beneficial to apply a thick layer (3") of rich organic mulch that will help retain moisture and allow for more diverse plantings. But first clear away any scaly leaf fall from your cedars. (It can be used as a

Miscanthus varieties easily get up to 5 or 6 feet. Tall perennials like *Aconitum*, *Artemisia* 'Guizho' and *Eupatorium* can all be relied upon to provide some temporary screening.

There are a few things to consider when making decisions about screening:

- First of all, tall fast growing trees rarely stop where one wants them to.
- Secondly, what will be the long-term effect of a tall planting on your own garden. Will it block your view or put your sunny garden in shade?
- Maintenance is another very important consideration. A tall hedge can be very expensive to maintain if it is beyond easy reach.
- Lastly, at what level exactly is the screening required? If the objectionable view is at the six foot level, there's no need to plant a 10 foot hedge. Conversely if screening is needed at the 15-20 foot level a planting of trees would be better than one of shrubs, even fast growing ones.

weed-suppressing mulch for pathways.) If possible, limb up the tree canopy and remove the lowest branches for better light and air circulation. Shrubs such as Fatsia, Choisya, Cotoneaster, Portugal Laurel, Box Honeysuckle, Aucuba, Mahonia cultivars, Yew, Wax Leaf Privet, Prunus 'Otto Luyken', Holly, Euonymus and Ruscus will all do well once established. Perennials such as Epimedium, Euphorbia robbiae, Bergenia, Vinca, Hosta, Hellebore, Galium, Cyclamen, Geranium macrorrhizum and Geranium phaeum, Solomon's Seal and Pulmonaria would complement the shrubs and add another element to the planting. Remember, though, that all these plants will need to be watered regularly until established.

It can be hard to dig around tree roots so smaller plants are usually easier to get in the ground than larger ones. If digging is impossible or just too much work a collection of nice pots planted with some of the aforementioned plants will look great instead!