

## Nursery News

- Alert visitors to our nursery may have noticed the **sunbathing Beckett sisters** in our display garden. A local photographer has taken a very good photo of them and posted it on his website. If you'd like to see it, it's at <http://www.pbase.com/wiley1/root> Click on the picture of our nursery sign with the caption "Caution: Nudity!"
- Hours:** We're open 7 days a week from 9 to 5.
- The **Master Gardeners are holding clinics at the nursery again** this spring on April 14<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, May 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> and June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. The clinics are held from 12:00 noon to 4:00 on those dates. Those friendly and helpful souls are here to answer any gardening questions or concerns you may have.
- Classes will be starting up again in June** and the schedule will be sent out by email. If we don't have you on the list for our online maintenance and pruning bulletins, please drop us a quick note to [russellnursery@telus.net](mailto:russellnursery@telus.net)
- A warm welcome** to Katja Martinelli and Faye Ford, who have joined us this spring. Angie is leaving us soon on maternity leave and will be sadly missed.
- It's time to fertilize, if you haven't done so already.** Lawns should have been done by now, but it's still not too late for the first feeding. For trees, shrubs and perennials, Acer 20-10-10 slow release fertilizer is the best general purpose fertilizer we have, and is what we use here at the nursery. It is available in 3 sizes: 4, 8 and 20 kg.
- Tickets are available now at the nursery for the **Victoria Conservatory of Music Mother's Day Garden Tour.**
- Questions? Comments? Suggestions?** We'd love to hear from you. Our mailing address is Russell Nursery 1370 Wain Rd. North Saanich, BC V8L 5K8. Our phone number is 656-0384 and our email address is [russellnursery@telus.net](mailto:russellnursery@telus.net)

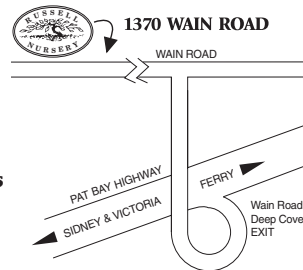
## Russell Nursery in North Saanich

- Trees • Shrubs • Perennials • Pottery
- Seasonal Annuals and Herbs

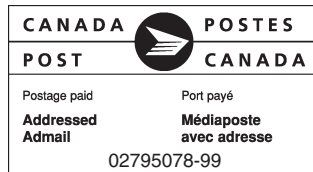
**Unusual and hard-to-find plants along with all the old favourites for your garden. Specializing in trees, shrubs and perennials. Wide Selection of Japanese Maples.**

1370 Wain Road, North Saanich – Phone 656-0384

Regular hours open daily 9-5:00 except some holidays

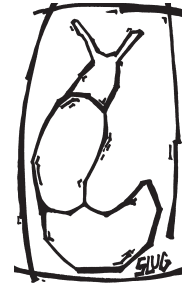


Russell Nursery  
1370 Wain Road  
North Saanich, BC V8L 5V1



# Spring 2007 GARDENING NEWS

## Slugging it out with Slugs - by Laurel and Katja



Slugs find our damp West Coast climate very much to their liking - you don't find them in dry climates. In the forest they are an important part of the cycle of growth and breakdown of organic material, but in our gardens their work is not so impressive. It's pretty disheartening to find holes in new leaves and precious seedlings munched to little nubs.

Slugs do the most damage in the spring, when they hone in on succulent new growth. They are most active at night and aren't usually seen during the day. Often the only evidence of their presence is their characteristic slime trail and the destruction they leave behind them.

Gardeners have more than a few weapons in their arsenal to use against these voracious creatures. Slug bait is one of the easiest to use and the new iron based products are effective and not harmful to anything but slugs.

When they eat it they just crawl away and eventually dehydrate.

Beer traps are very tempting to slugs and a sozzled slug invariably succumbs to overindulgence! A 'slug pub', consisting of a small amount of beer in a shallow container nestled into the ground is sure to attract many patrons. If you are not inclined to share your favourite brew you could make a slug cocktail consisting of 1 cup water, 1 tsp of sugar and 1/4 tsp of yeast. It's the yeast that they really like.

During the daytime slugs like to be in damp shady areas and this can work to your advantage. A cozy place to hide, such as an upturned pot, wooden plank, or a grapefruit rind could all become traps.

Copper barriers are very effective, as copper wire carries a mild electrical current. We have strips of copper wrapped around the legs of all our benches and it works well. Copper pot scrubbers are an economical source of copper. Just unravel them and arrange the wire around the plants you are trying to protect.



Kim, Brian, Angie, Lynne, Leah, Craig, Katja, Michele, Laurel, Sue, Laurie and Faye.

**GARDENING NEWS** comes to you courtesy of  
**Russell Nursery in North Saanich**

1370 Wain Road, N. Saanich 656-0384  
Regular hours – open daily, 9-5

Slugs have many natural predators. Birds, frogs, garter snakes and ground beetles all like a tasty slug dinner. By providing habitat and not using pesticides they can all be encouraged to take up residence.

For the not-so-squeamish, secateurs are a satisfying weapon. There is an art to using secateurs to pick up, chop and toss the little varmints all in one smooth motion, but's it's well worth practising!

One can always take the line of least resistance and refrain from planting their favour-

ite foods. Slugs have a particular fondness for delphiniums, lupines, marigolds, impatiens, pansies, hostas, dahlias and lilies. They are not so fond of scented, leathery or fuzzy leaves like those on geraniums, viburnums, cistus, basil, alliums, ferns, camellia, lavenders and many others.

Finally, we'd like to encourage you to show mercy on our native Banana slug, sometimes referred to as "Nature's Little Composter". They feed on decaying leaves and are not garden pests in the same way as the others, and should be left alone.

## Staff Plant Favourites



**Laurel's choice:** "Tiger Eyes" Sumac. It's new, it's sexy, it has fabulous leaf colour, starting with chartreuse in spring, bright gold in summer and finally scarlet orange in fall. This variety is a compact grower, to about 6 by 6 feet, and spreads more slowly than the regular sumac. Will take dry conditions once established. Try it as a specimen or in a shrub border, in sun or part shade. (Botanical name: *Rhus typhina* 'Bailtiger')

**Laurie's choice:** *Phlomis russeliana* (type of Jerusalem Sage). With its fuzzy, heart-shaped leaves and unique butter yellow flowers displayed in whorls close to the main stems, *Phlomis russeliana* makes a wonderful medium height ground cover. It's simple, easy to grow, not at all fussy, not bothered by pests and it takes dry conditions. Try it front or mid border, in a sunny well drained site. It combines well with *Euphorbia*, *Sedum*, ornamental grasses and lavender.

**Faye's Choice:** *Chamaecyparis* 'Fernspray Gold' The most asked about plant in Faye's garden is this ferny-leafed little conifer from the Hinoki Cypress family. Foliage fanatics love this one for its wonderful sprays in fresh shades of green and gold. It grows in sun or part shade and is very nice in the woodland garden, adding spice and light against a darker green backdrop.

**Brian's Choice:** *Magnolia seiboldii*. The Oyama Magnolia is a superb, large handsome shrub 8 to 12 feet high and wide, with waxy, fragrant white flowers with a striking crimson red eye. It's unusual compared to the other magnolias as the flowers occur with the leaves, in late spring and sporadically into the summer. It is also the best Magnolia for partial shade conditions, though it also grows in full sun. Try it in a mixed part shade border, with hostas and ferns.



**Sophie's Choice:** Sorry, no Sophie here, but there is rather a good movie by that name with Meryl Streep.

## Picture Perfect Peonies - by Susan Tice

Somehow, big clumps of garden peonies always seem to have an air of old world charm about them. Peonies invoke visions of garden parties and ladies in big hats. They have substance and a sense of permanence. Not surprising really, considering that they last practically forever. Fifty year old plants are common and even 100 year old plants can be found in old gardens.



There are three types of peonies. Those known as garden peonies are herbaceous and die to the ground each fall. Tree peonies are woody and over time grow to be large shrubs. The third type, known as an intersectional, is a cross between the two. They are herbaceous and have leaves and flowers like those of tree peonies.

Peonies have been in cultivation in China for more than two thousand years and were grown originally for medicinal use. At some point they became popular as garden plants and were even put under Imperial protection. The best varieties commanded high prices and were often part of a dowry.

By the twelfth century Chinese plant breeders were at work producing many varieties of large, double flowered tree and herbaceous peonies. At the same time horticulturists in Japan were working on simple single or semi-double types.

Much later, in 1948, Toichi Itoh became the first to create an intersectional peony. They have been called 'Itoh' peonies in his honour. Growing them in quantity has been a difficult task, but now, sixty years later, they are finally available on a limited commercial basis. We started seeing them last year and they are fabulous.

By the late 1800's European and American peony growers used plants from China and Japan to produce hundreds of new hybrids, such as 'Sarah Bernhart', 'Felix Crousse', and 'Karl Rosenfeld', which are still available.

Peonies come in an array of colours that are simply drop-dead gorgeous: every shade of pink imaginable, deep luscious reds, bright coral, clear white and even yellow. Who can resist 'Pink Hawaiian Coral', a semi-double type in deep coral tones or 'Krinkled White' which

looks like *Romneya*, but is much easier to grow! The ever popular 'Bowl of Beauty', is a rich pink with a yellow centre.

Peonies are great additions to the perennial border. They look impressive in and out of flower and once established need a minimum of care. The big double ones do need to be staked, but the single and semi-double varieties are usually self-supporting. They are long lasting as cut flowers and, should you want them for a special event, they can be picked in bud weeks ahead and held in the fridge until needed!

### Success with Peonies

- Peonies need a minimum of 6 hours of full sun a day and good air circulation.
- Plant them in deep, rich soil. Clay soils are great as long as drainage is good. pH should be neutral to slightly alkaline.
- Herbaceous peonies should be planted so that the buds are about two inches below the surface.
- Tree peonies are always grafted and the grafts should be about 6 inches below the soil surface.
- Stake varieties with large, double flowers. Peony rings work for shorter varieties, but for taller varieties use several sturdy cedar stakes and string. Get the stakes in early and let the plants grow into their supports.
- Deadhead after flowering and cut foliage to the ground after the first frost in the fall. Do not cut the woody stems of tree peonies.
- Peonies rarely need to be divided and hate to be moved, but if it is necessary to do either, it should be done in the fall.
- Apply well-aged compost around, not on top of, the plants in the fall.
- In the spring apply a fertilizer that is higher in phosphorus and potassium than nitrogen.
- Choose some early, midseason and late flowering varieties for a longer bloom time.
- Newly planted peonies can take up to three years to bloom, depending on plant size, growing conditions and genetics - be patient!