

August 2020

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Root Concerns

Notes from the underground

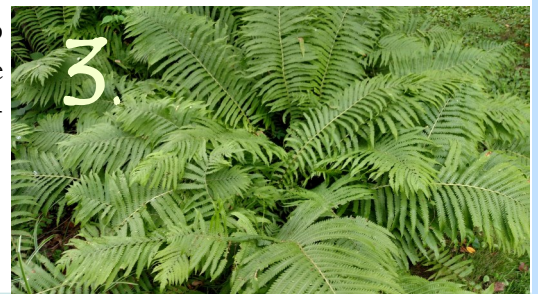
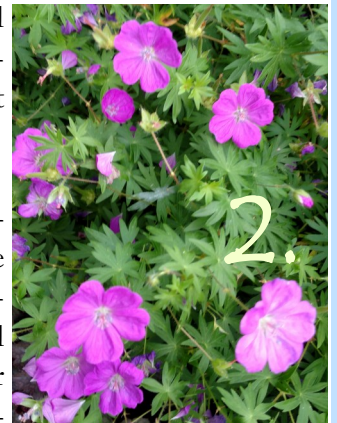
Perennial Gardens Can Be Made In The Shade



Come with me as we journey into the shade garden beyond the hosta, astilbe, and heuchera. We will discover many perennials that will grow and even thrive in the shade. If you have some light, you absolutely can have some flowering plants! Have ever really looked at a forest? Have you noticed the layers of plants? There are basically three layers. The top layer consists of tall, mighty, deciduous and evergreen trees. The middle height is smaller trees, native shrubs and some herbaceous perennials. Some of those prefer the edge of the forest. The lower level is the ground floor. Here you will find ground covers and shorter plants. The trees keep the soil moist and cool. Fallen leaves decompose to create rich, organic soil for shade plants. Most of us will need to replicate that with soil amendments such as compost and peat moss.

NYS forests are home to many native plants, and each depends upon specific growing conditions. It's best to leave them in the forest. Some of them are rare, protected, threatened, or vulnerable. Some are protected by the environmental conservation laws. For more information, you can contact or search the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation websites. I am not going to cover all native plants. I am only going to focus on shade plants you may have overlooked at the garden center, while arm chair gardening with catalogs and magazines, or on garden tours.

If you're thinking you can't grow anything or have flowers because you have shade, let's change that mind set! There are plants for deep shade and partial shade. Dry shade is the most challenging and plant selection is limited. Many plants will survive in deep shade but may not flower. Simply put, the lesser the amount of sunlight, the less flowering and more foliage plants you will need.



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Text by Rensselaer County Master Gardener Carol Mastromarchi

Partial shade is defined as more than 3 hours but less than 6 hours of sun. As gardeners, we love to “push the envelope”. Sometimes that will lead to new ideas. There are trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials that will grow in the shade. I am only going to cover herbaceous perennials. The list of suggestions does not include those that may tolerate some shade but prefer full sun.

Groundcovers: A groundcover’s job is to cover the ground. Yes, all of it! Keep your weed whacker handy to keep them from trying to take over your sidewalk.

Ajuga (Bugleweed) has green or purple (nearly black) leaves and blue flowers in late spring through early summer. It will easily escape into your lawn. Prefers partial shade.

Galium (Sweet Woodruff) has white flowers in spring. It will spread rapidly over large areas and needs consistent moisture. Prefers dappled shade.

Lamium (Dead Nettle) Prefers partial shade. It has lavender (‘Orchid Frost’), white (‘White Nancy’), or purple (‘Purple Dragon’) flowers. ‘Purple Dragon’ will scorch in afternoon sun. ‘Golden Anniversary’ has variegated golden yellow and green leaves with rose-pink flowers.

Lamiastrum (Yellow Archangel) has yellow flowers in spring. It can quickly cover a large area. It will grow in dense shade but does best in partial shade. It grows by underground stolons and can be a thug. It’s useful for filling in large areas of dense shade where little else grows.



Some plants for dense shade (less than 3 hours of light):

Ferns (silver leaf varieties need some partial sun) (Photo 3)

Hosta (green or blue leaf varieties) Varieties with gold or white in the leaf require some partial sun)

Pachysandra

Vinca (probably won’t flower)

Partial Shade Plants (more than 3 hours of light but less than 6):

Aconitum (Monkshood) Dark Blue flowers in late summer

Alchemilla mollis (Lady’s Mantle) yellow green flowers in spring. It is an often over-looked plant that adds interest. It needs moisture. (Photo 5)

Anemone (Windflower) spring and fall varieties, spring is white flowers, fall flowers are usually red or pink. These will spread by underground roots and seeds.

Aquilegia (Columbine) spring flowering, native is red flowers, hybrids come in many colors

Aruncus (Goatsbeard) white flowers in early summer, both tall and short varieties. Look for “Chantilly Lace”. Finally, people are beginning to plant this beauty. (Photo 8)

Astilbe (False Spirea) mid-summer-fall flowers are pink, red, peach, or white. “Visions” series leads the pack. ‘Fanal’ and ‘Montgomery’ are reputed to be the best reds.

Astrantia (Masterwort) spring flowers in white or pink. Hard to find. Needs cool, moist shade.

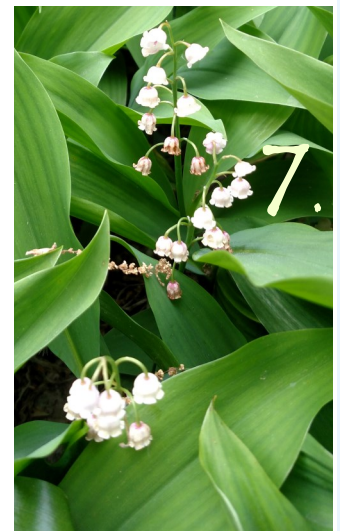
Bergenia (Pigsqueak) has early spring, pink flowers. Needs morning sun. Doesn’t like heavy soil. Not widely sold. (Photo 4)



Brunnera (perennial Forget Me Not) blue flowers in spring. Loves to grow on the banks of a stream and in moist woodlands. Partial shade and consistent moisture are a must.

Cimicifuga (sometime classified as *Actea*, a.k.a. bugbane) tall spikes of white flowers in summer. Dark leaf and green leaf varieties (Photo 1).

Convallaria (lily of the valley) white or pink fragrant flowers in spring. A classic favorite that prefers some shade and spreads. Lovely in a small vase. (Photo 7)



Corydalis has small yellow or blue flowers in spring. The yellow one is the most common. This plant needs good drainage. The blue variety doesn't do well at all with wet feet.

Dicentra exima (Fringeleaf Bleeding Heart) blooms spring through fall. Short (12-18 inches). It can have red, white, or pink flowers.

Dicentra spectabilis (traditional Bleeding Heart) spring blooms of red, white, or pink. May go dormant in summer.

Digitalis (Foxglove) most sold are biennials that flower in summer. Most flowers are a pink or purple combo.

Digitalis lutea (Small Yellow Foxglove) perennial has yellow flowers in summer. It is a rare find. Look for seeds in catalogs or online.

Doronicum (Leopard's Bane) is a member of the daisy family with yellow flowers in early spring. It's sad that this plant is no longer grown commercially or offered in garden centers. Look for seeds in catalogs or online.

Filipendula (Meadowsweet) has white or pink flowers in late spring. Not widely sold.

Geranium (Cranesbill) is available in a wide range of pinks, purple, blue and white flowers. It flowers in spring to early summer. Some varieties have blooms most of the summer. This plant will tolerate partial shade and survive in deeper shade. Some flowering will be sacrificed and it really depends on the variety. A problem with mildew may occur if soil is too moist. Geraniums prefer a drier soil. It likes to sleep the first year. This sadly causes many buyers to walk past this beauty. (Photo 2)

Helleborus (Lenten Rose) is one of the earliest spring perennials to flower. It prefers deciduous shade. It comes in many colors and can have single or double flowers. *Helleborus niger* (Winter Rose) has white flowers in late winter to early spring.

Heuchera (Coral Bells) this genus has many choices of leaf colors and color combos. Flowers are white, pink, or white. Read the April newsletter.

Heucherella (Foamy Bells) is a cross of *Heuchera* and *Tiarella*. It has white or pink flowers in spring. Look for new leaf colors of pumpkin orange to brighten your garden.

Hosta (Plantain Lily) I hope by now, you have discovered the many, pretty varieties of hosta. It has white or lavender flowers in late summer. We are way beyond green and white leaves. The Shadowland series is very popular. Don't forget the oldies but goodies like 'Patriot' and 'Montana Aureomarginata.'

Ligularia (Ragwort) is a plant that is too often left behind but is worthy of the shade garden. 'Bottle Rocket' is a compact plant with yellow spikes of flowers. It is an excellent performer. It maxes out at about 30 inches tall. 'Britt Marie Crawford' has burgundy leaves and tall, golden, daisy flowers to deliver the wow factor. The more sun, the deeper the burgundy but it doesn't like full sun. It is gaining in popularity. 'The Rocket' is a tall beauty with spikes of flowers that can reach 4 ft. or more. This is getting hard to find probably because of its size. These plants need water and will grow well by a pond or water garden.

Lobelia (Cardinal Flower) has spikes of red flowers in summer. It is another plant that sits there the first year. It is a good plant for pollinators. It is gorgeous alongside a pond or other water feature. The water provides a mirror for the striking, red flowers. If you walk through the forests, you will often see it there beside a pond or a stream.

Myosotis (Forget Me Not) is a biennial that has pink, white, or blue flowers. It relies on producing seeds to live from year to year.

Phlox divaricata (Woodland Phlox) has blue or white flowers in spring. It needs partial shade and moist but well drained soil.

Polemonium (Jacobs Ladder) has blue flowers in spring. 'Stairway to Heaven' has variegated leaves. It has faded from the marketplace and may be hard to find. 'Heaven Scent' is the classic with green leaves. It remains a nice plant for the partial shade.

Primula (Primrose) flowers in spring. Many colors are available. It requires some moisture in the soil.

Thalictrum (Meadow Rue) is a tall wispy plant with flowers of white, lavender, pink, or yellow. It flowers in summer. There are dwarf varieties about 2 feet tall. Requires moisture in the soil.

Tricyrtis (Toad Lily) has speckled, lilac flowers in late summer through autumn. Moist, fertile soil is ideal.

Viola (Violets) flowers in spring. Many colors are available. Some will tolerate full sun but they prefer a shaded garden. The nickname, shrinking violet, is a misnomer. It can spew its seed several feet.

As Kermit the Frog said, "It isn't easy being green". You can design a garden with shades of green and blue leaves, variegated plants in partial shade, different textures and heights. You can have flowers. I hope you will discover that shade gardens can be diversified and beautiful.

Reference: *Herbaceous Perennial Plants* (Second Edition) by Allan M. Armitage



TICKLED BY ORNAMENTAL GRASSES



There's nothing like a summer drought to make my already grand appreciation of ornamental grasses grow, since most tolerate lack of rain and plenty of heat without missing a beat. Beyond toughness, they've got other virtues in spades, coming in a range of colors, textures, forms and heights. Most are totally pest free, can tolerate poor soils and demand little care. What else can we ask for in a perennial plant?

Native switchgrasses (*Panicums*) grow four to five feet tall and have airy, fine textured seed-heads. Red foliated ones include 'Rehbraun' and 'Warrior' while bluish foliage types include 'Dallas Blues' and 'Prairie Sky.' Blue fescues (*Festuca* species) make cute, spiny-looking clumps growing to about 12 inches, perfect for the front of a hot, dry border. Mine, in fact, refuse to grow in the garden soil but have moved into the gravel driveway, where they actually don't mind getting run over occasionally in exchange for the sharp drainage. And Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) is a tough native with surprisingly large, yellow flowers that appear as summer starts to slip toward fall.

Some of the most attractive and popular ornamental grasses belong to the genus *Miscanthus sinensis* and hail from Japan. *Miscanthus* 'Strictus,' a.k.a. porcupine grass, has bright yellow bands on its green foliage and creates a great clump seven or more feet tall. A white and green haystack describes 'Variegatus,' a favorite of Victorian gardeners, while 'Morning Light,' growing to about five feet tall, has very thin, wistful white and gray-green leaves. It may in fact be the prettiest grass of all. The straight species or "wild" type of *Miscanthus* has rightfully earned a bad reputation for self-sowing and becoming an exotic weed, so it is important to avoid planting it.

Three grasses are particularly noteworthy for their display of tall stems, flowers and leaves. Karl Forster feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora*) grows a low grassy skirt, then shoots narrow vertical beige flower stalks three feet in the air. Tall purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) makes a similar short skirt, then pops delicate flower stems in every direction, looking rather like a firework, up to eight feet high. It looks best with a wall, fence or evergreens as a backdrop, or positioned to catch the setting sun.

Three more favorites are not grasses at all, but sedges, which in most ways look grass-like. *Carex* 'Blue Zinger' is only the greenest of blues at best, but is a very tough groundcover that will thrive in shade, even under a walnut tree. Flashier is 'Ice Dance,'



which has green foliage edged in pure white and grows to about 18 inches. It also forms a weed-impenetrable mat. Fanciest is *Carex siderosticha* 'Variegata,' with fat, pointy leaves edged in white and an elegant character. It is somewhat less drought tolerant than the others but equally weed suppressive. A friend recently gave me a plant of *Carex* 'Banana Boat,' with jaunty yellow foliage, which is guaranteed to make an ornamental grass lover like me go ape.



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY DAVID CHINERY

Oh Deer, You're Here!



After 24 years, my gardening honeymoon is over. While I'm nowhere near throwing in the trowel, I'm sorry to say that the deer have truly arrived. While living with deer is standard practice for many gardeners in the Hudson Valley, I certainly have enjoyed my almost quarter-century gardening largely without them.

I must admit feeling rather smug in the past. I figured that the busy road in front of the house, and the wooded cliff behind, were discouraging to deer. While our neighborhood on the edge of suburbia is very green, most folks surrounding me are not gardeners, so there is little of unusual horticultural (and culinary) interest to attract the hungry horde, other than my place. So while I certainly sympathized with my green-thumb chums who face deer damage daily, I also counted my blessings and thanked my lucky stars.

Gradually, though, things have changed. A few winters ago, the deer ate the bottom four feet of my arborvitae hedge, which runs between our side yard and the house next door. I didn't notice this until one day when I could see Mr. Moore's Pontiac much better than before. After that, a few leaves might disappear here, a flower or two vanish there, but it was no big deal. Then last winter, our giant backyard oak dropped an Armageddon of acorns. The deer visited nightly, making deep hoof prints in the snow covering my hosta garden and the one good patch of lawn we had, turning it all into a minefield of mud. Word among the herd must have gone out that this was the dining place to be. Now this summer, the hostas have lost their leaves, the tomatoes their fruit, and I my patience.

Deterring browsing by deer offers two primary options: repellants and fencing. For now, I've gathered the stray bits of fencing from the shed and cordoned off some of the surviving hostas and all of the dahlias. I've also invested in a jug of deer repellent. I say "invested" since it cost almost as much as my first car, all for some putrescent eggs, thyme, garlic and soap. And wow, does it stink, the kind of stench that stays in your mind's nose for days. But after deploying the smelly solution, we had the first night without a loss from the tomato patch, so I am pleased.

I'm also pondering a fence. Deer can jump almost eight feet high with ease, as well as shove under or shoulder through a wimpy fence, so any construction needs to be well-planned and sturdy. Black plastic mesh comes in various sizes and is a popular option. I need about a 300 foot length to enclose most of the backyard, and at eight feet high, with 21 posts and two gates, this system would cost about \$2,000, self-installed. While I could buy a lot of tomatoes and hostas for that amount, this looks like the price I must pay to remain a gardener.



Text and photos by David Chinery

Picture These Natives!

Inspired by master gardener training in 2018, I have been replacing exotic plants with strict-native and native cultivars in my Poestenkill garden. Here are some July and August bloomers. Using these plants to study growth conditions, good and bad bug interactions, and ecological services such as nectar, pollen, seeds, and host material for insect life cycles has raised my gardening experience to another level.



Scutellaria incana (Hoary Skullcap) attracts hummingbirds, butterflies, and moths, and is a host for Skullcap Skeletonizer Moth (Photo 1).

Helianthus helianthoides var. *scabra* ‘Sommersonne’ (False Sunflower), attracts butterflies, bees, and birds for its seed, as well as red aphids (Photo 2).

Agastache ‘Blue Fortune’ (Hybrid Giant Hyssop), attracts bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Planted in 2003, this allegedly sterile hybrid has spread throughout my garden so perhaps it is a wild one, not the original (Photo 3).

Senna hebecarpa (Wild Senna), attracts bumblebees and halictid bees, the extra-floral nectaries attract ants and other insects, and the seeds are eaten by game birds. It is the larval host plant for the Cloudless Sulphur Butterfly (Photo 4).

Caulophyllum thalictroides (Blue Cohosh), is pollinated by parasitoid wasps, small bees, bumblebees, and flies, while its berries are consumed by birds and some mammals (Photo 5).

Veronicastrum virginicum (Culver’s Root), attracts butterflies and bees (Photo 6).

Allium cernuum (Nodding onion), has flowers which attract bees, parasitic wasps, and butterflies, and it the larval host for the Hairstreak Butterfly (Photo 7).

Clematis virginiana (Virgin’s-bower), is a replacement for the alien invasive *Clematis terniflora* (Sweet Autumn Clematis), and attracts bees, wasps, butterflies and moths (Photo 8).

Echinacea tenesseeensis (Tennessee coneflower) was recently removed from the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Endangered Species list due to conservation efforts. Its flowers follow the sun, and it produces large amount of nectar, thereby attracting native bees and many butterfly species. It easily cross-pollinates with other *Echinaceas* (Photo 9).

Eupatorium dubium ‘Little Joe’ (Joe Pye Weed), offers nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, skippers and other beneficial insects, seeds for birds, and is a larval host plant for over 40 butterfly species (Photo 10).

Veronia noveboracensis (New York Ironweed), attracts native bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, birds for seeds (Photo 11).

Photo 12: Meadow in a pot!



Alternation of Generations

Text by Rensselaer
County Master Gardener
Inge Eley

Perhaps you have heard the phrase “alternation of generations”. It used to be taught in all biology classes, but, now since so much molecular biology has entered the field of study, it is seldom mentioned in the classroom. Let me explain.

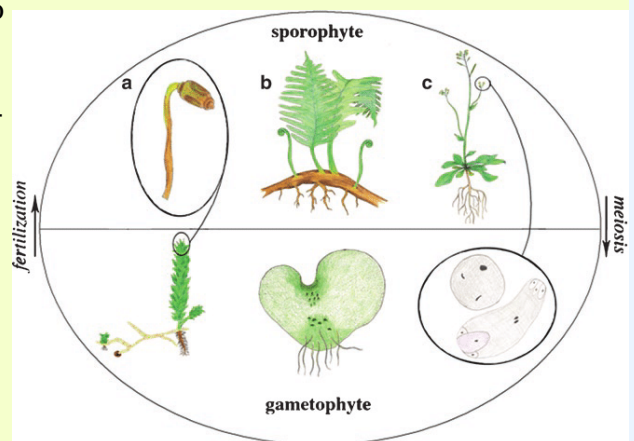
Early life (about three and a half billion years ago) had one set of DNA (hereditary material or deoxyribose nuclei acid). Life with one set of DNA is called monoploid. As time went on, life became more complex, eventually consisting of life with two sets of DNA, or diploid life. Plants still spend a part of their life in the monoploid stage and part of their life in the diploid stage. Hence, when considering sexual reproduction in plants, the monoploid stage alters with the diploid stage.

Let’s look at a common land plant - moss. The green leafy moss plant that one commonly sees is the monoploid generation. These plants produce gametes, so the green leafy moss plant is also called the gametophyte generation. Many moss gametophytes have two different heads (top of the moss plant). For example, hair cap moss (*Polytrichum*) may have a pointy head (female) or a round disc head (male). I remember once walking on Peebles Island looking to see if I could find both sexes of moss to bring to my botany class. Two walkers came by and said something like “I know what you’re doing!” I couldn’t imagine that they would know what I was looking for. So, I asked them what they thought I was doing. They said I was looking for my contact lens. I can only imagine their surprise when I told them I was looking for male and female moss plants.

Now, back to the story. The male moss plant produces swimming sperm, and they are helped in their journey to the egg if the sperm are splashed out by rain water. So, the flat head is an advantage. After the sperm reaches the egg, he can join it, and together they form the first cell of the diploid generation, the zygote. If you have seen a moss plant with a thin stalk growing out of the head, you have seen both of the generations. The thin stalk growing out of the top has a capsule at its end. This capsule is called a sporangium and spores are produced in it, so the thin stalk is the sporophyte generation. Spores are produced by a special division called meiosis. Meiosis reduces the amount of DNA in the daughter cells to the monoploid condition. So the spore is the first cell of the monoploid generation.

What about other plants? Do they also have a monoploid (gametophyte) and a diploid (sporophyte) generation? Yes! If you look at ferns, you might notice dark colored dots (often on the undersides of their leaves). Those dark dots are clusters of sporangia. Again, spores are produced by meiosis, so again, the spore is the first cell of the monoploid generation. Do fern spores grown into fern gametophytes? Yes! Have you ever seen a fern gametophyte? Probably not. The fern gametophyte is small, usually less than one quarter of an inch. Some fern gametophytes produce both sperm and egg on the same thallus (body), while other ferns have separate male and female gametophytes. Imagine how difficult it is for microscopic gametes to get together. Fern sperm, like moss sperm, must swim to the egg.

What about the seed plants? The seed is what is involved in sexual reproduction, not spores. Wrong! In flowering plants the anther consists of microsporangia in which microspores are produced by meiosis. The microspore is shed as pollen. A pollen grain contains three cells, two sperm as well as a nucleus that directs the growth of a pollen tube down to the ovary of a flower. In the ovary there is at least one (eg. peach), but usually more ovules. The ovules contain a megaspore (monoploid). The megaspore nucleus divides to form eight cells, one of which is the egg. So, both gametes of flowering plants are found in multicellular structures (pollen with three cells) and the embryo sack with eight cells. Of course, as mentioned before, the ovule develops into the seed, but before we can have the seed, we must have a microspore and a megaspore. So, in sexual reproduction of all plants, the monoploid generation must alternate with the diploid generation.



Backyard Beautiful

Sometimes it is easy to overlook the beauty that’s right in our own backyard. That was one of the ideas behind the “Tour of Troy Gardens” that our Master Gardeners took themselves on this past Wednesday. Since many of us don’t want to travel too far during this Pandemic, it made sense to stay close to home and visit two of the sites Master Gardener volunteers spend hundreds of hours making beautiful in the Col- lar City each season.



Donning masks, toting hand sanitizer and checking boxes on health forms, we met at the 9/11 Memorial Park in Lansingburgh, standing six feet apart. Owned by the City of Troy, the focus of the park is a dark marble and steel monument dedicated to the tragedy of that September day in 2001. It’s a beautiful spot for a pocket park, adjacent to the Hudson River and just north of the 112th Street Bridge, but not that long ago it wasn’t so pretty. Derelict house trailers stood here, and after their removal it was a rather ugly empty lot. The monument was dedicated in 2011, and Master Gardeners have been involved with beautifying the park for the last nine years. Knockout roses surround the monument, and daylilies line the walkways. A mixed border perennial garden featuring a wide variety of plants, including redbuds, hydrangeas, coneflowers and ornamental grasses forms the north border. While it is a very lovely garden today, the site still isn’t without challenges. The steep riverbank makes weeding a death-defying task, since plants of all kinds easily take root on the slope and shoot skyward, threatening to block the view. The soil occasionally yields peculiar trash, while less than upright park visitors and dogs leave their own calling cards. The Master Gardeners have learned to take this all with a shrug and a chuckle. Local companies have donated fencing and landscaping supplies, and the Master Gardeners receive support from the City via grant funds, trash collection and lawn mowing, making the maintenance of this urban gem a community effort.

Our second stop was Leslie’s Garden, located just south of Washington Park on Adams Street. The garden is owned by TAP, Inc., a local non-profit, and was named in honor of Leslie Adler, an ardent supporter of Troy whose efforts led to numerous State-sponsored community grants for neighborhood improvement. Chico Christopher, a long-time Master Gardener and TAP employee, was the garden’s caretaker, but after his passing in 2017 additional Master Gardeners joined with TAP Board members and staff, as well as the Riverside Neighborhood Association, to keep the garden growing. Today, Leslie’s Garden features a variety of perennials and small trees surrounding two open spaces with benches, which encourages small gatherings and neighbor interaction. In high summer, a huge circle of colorful zinnas becomes an eyecatcher. The garden is adjacent to the School Ten Apartments, owned by TAP, that are income-eligible homes in a former Troy public school. It’s a wonderful harmony of plants and people cooperating to create a special place.



Text and photos by David Chinery

Herb Gardening 101



If my head hurts, I go to the medicine cabinet. When dinner is bland, I look at the spice rack. Using deodorant and cologne helps make me socially acceptable. None of these actions require any knowledge of horticulture, but a few generations ago, none were possible without knowing how to grow, preserve and use plants, or at least having some servants to do it for you. But thanks to modern manufacturing, all I need to do now is visit a store, and home cures have largely gone the way of sword fighting, butter churning and hoop rolling...or have they?

Not entirely, perhaps. A few Master Gardeners are beguiled by herbal legends and lore, find modern ways to use herbs, and are turned on by the plants themselves. This group takes good care of the herb display at the Demonstration Garden, located at the Robert C. Parker School in North Greenbush. Four raised beds in a formal design hold a variety of plants prized for their usefulness, all surrounded by a picket fence. In a “normal” summer, one of our evening herb programs would have the Master Gardeners showing off their lavender cookie recipes, experimenting with eyewashes and dry shampoos, and concocting refreshing elixirs. But not this summer, of course.

Nevertheless, our little garden is a good showcase of herbs that a creative modern person might use as well as a few plants which are as obsolete as flatirons. Considering the former, a sprig of easily grown spearmint (*Mentha spicata*) in your iced tea is still refreshing, even if the tea comes from a store-bought powder. Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) and thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) are similarly easy and simple to use, too, in meat dishes and breads. And many gardeners don't consider it summer without basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), made into pesto or as part of that ultimate August cuisine, a homegrown tomato sandwich.

But we've got wormwood and marshmallow, too. Before appearing as a character in C.S. Lewis's “The Screwtape Letters,” wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) was used to make absinthe, beer and vermouth, as an ingredient in various liniments, and for de-worming farm animals. A sprawling, three foot tall plant with gray-green foliage, its concentrated oils can be extremely poisonous. Given wormwood's rather strong and not-unpleasant scent, it was used as a strewing herb in churches and other public places to make those without deodorant less socially unacceptable.

A paste made from the roots of marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*) was used in cough syrups, since it soothed the throat, and also yielded the first, totally organic, marshmallows. Imagine the work those kids from yesteryear had to endure, digging, drying and processing a bunch of roots just to make s'mores!

The recognition that many “wild” plants as well as ornamentals once had widely known herbal properties is as obscure as homemade marshmallows. The pesky lawn plantain (*Plantago major*) soothed nettle stings and wounds, while shrubby, invasive barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*) cured jaundice.

Would I remain socially acceptable by trading my “Old Spice” for a mixture of lavender, peppermint, tarragon and anise?



Text and photos by David Chinery

What to do in August

Now is the time to think ahead towards harvesting. Whittier gives a good pep talk when he says, "He who smites the summer weed may trust thee for the autumn corn."

KEEP WEEDING! The autumn colors and scents will be sweeter for it.

Many perennials can be profitably divided and replanted now. Swap or share with neighbors and friends. Many shrubs which need transplanting can be moved comfortably now and will settle in well for winter, having had three or four months to get re-established.

Humidity at this time of the year often creates a good environment for fungal diseases, especially powdery mildew on phlox and roses. Sanitation and thinning to provide aeration between stems will minimize problems.



Roses are demanding all the time, but they are absolutely insistent right now. They want all the attention you can give them and will respond handsomely to cleaning and pruning.

Out on the lawn, insects are busy munching on the lush burst of growth. Healthy turf is more resistant to damage from chinch bugs, sod webworms and grubs. If damage becomes apparent, call Cornell Cooperative Extension for advice.

Despite the tropical storm a couple of weeks ago, many plants still need supplemental watering, especially annuals and container plants. Their roots may have more volume than the soil does and they will dry rapidly.

Start preparing the houseplants and inspecting them for the gradual return indoors.

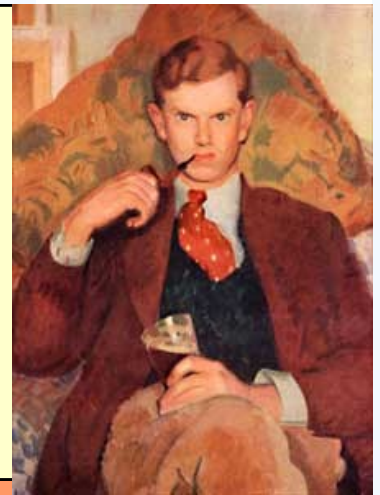
It's wonderful to go into the garden in August to see bushy plants that once were spindly transplants or a tiny row of seedlings trying to push through the soil. Now the vegetables are ready for picking! Visit your garden frequently to check your crops for produce. Home grown vegetables are best when they are young and tender.

While you're out there enjoying the thrill of victory, keep in mind there are still things to do. Continue watering as needed; most vegetables require one inch of water per week. Continue weeding to avoid letting the weeds go to seed in the garden. Keep adding refuse to the compost pile for use in the spring.



“If it could only be like this always - always summer, always alone, the fruit always ripe.”

Evelyn Waugh



Gardening Questions?

Call The Master Gardeners!



During the COVID 19 Pandemic, our offices are closed to the public, but you are welcome to contact us as directed below.

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Cornell Cooperative Extension



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Twilight Gardening Series (via Zoom)

[Export](#)

Thursday, September 10, 2020, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Thursday, September 17, 2020, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Thursday, September 24, 2020, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Thursday, October 1, 2020, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Thursday, October 8, 2020, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Thursday, October 15, 2020, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany, Columbia-Greene, Rensselaer & Schenectady Counties present...

Twilight Gardening Series:

Thursday Evenings 6:30 - 8:00 pm

September 10 – October 15, 2020

Six-Class Series to be held virtually via Zoom

September 10, 2020

Fall is for Lawns: Renewal and Recovery!

September, 17, 2020

Backyard Composting

September 24, 2020

Perennial Gardening

October 1, 2020

Bulbs

October, 8, 2020

Preparing Your Fruit Garden Site for Spring

October 15, 2020

Care and Maintenance of Fruiting Plants – It doesn't have to be hard!

For more information and to register, visit:

<http://albany.cce.cornell.edu/events/2020/09/10/twilight-gardening-series-via-zoom>



Lunch In The Garden

Webinar Series
Wednesdays at Noon

dhc3@cornell.edu

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County will continue offering the popular, free “Lunch In The Garden” webinars on Wednesdays in September. We’ll discuss a different gardening topic during each session, with a question and answer period following the presentation. On Wednesday, September 9 at Noon, Extension Educator David Chinery will present “Fall Is For Lawn Care,” a discussion of how to improve home lawns using overseeding and other green techniques. “Weeds, Wildflowers and Trees of Papscanee Island” will be offered on Wednesday, September 16 at Noon, when David Chinery will take you on a virtual tour of this hidden park along the Hudson River. Master Gardener Keith Austin will get us thinking about fall bulbs and their spring color in “Selecting, Buying and Planting Glorious Spring Bulbs” on Wednesday, September 30 at Noon. These presentations use the Zoom platform and you must download the free software in advance. To register, visit the Extension website at <http://ccerensselaer.org/events> or call (518) 272-4210.