Westmorland Horticultural Society's

Gardening Newsletter

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"The Friendly Garden People"
Growing Since 1928

www.whsociety.ca

Branching Out

The WHS welcomes new members and this month we're happy to welcome Catherine Taylor, Michael Archibald, and Jennifer Langille. Welcome!

Everyone with an interest in gardening is invited to drop in to one of our meetings to see what we're all about. Meetings are held at **7:00 PM** on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the **Mapleton Park Rotary Pavilion.** Find us on Facebook or check our website for upcoming events.

Next Meeting

In April, in lieu of a regular meeting, we will be holding our annual **Spring Potluck** on **April 28** at the beautiful Lutz Mountain Meeting House Museum, 3143 Mountain Road (two minutes North of Magnetic Hill). Bring a dish to share and a hearty appetite. Doors will open at 5:00 and a few volunteers will be needed to set up tables. The meal will begin promptly at 6:00. We have some amazing cooks in our club, and our potlucks are always a really fun evening. Mark it on your calendar now!

From The Editor

Every now and then when I'm researching ideas for articles for our newsletter, I come across one that really captures my attention. I hope everyone finds the article on page 4 as interesting as I did. I've always tried really hard to keep my gardens pollinator friendly. I try to have things in bloom at the times they really need them. I don't use toxic fertilizers or pesticides. I put out nest boxes for solitary bees. I also try to research new hybrids before I bring them home from a nursery to see if they'd been field tested, and like all of us, I was certainly aware that many new introductions are lacking the scent that was the best thing about the original variety. But I was unaware how much the new shape of the flower and the new colour of the flower can tire out our hummingbirds and bees as they search for nectar. Just one more thing to be aware of this spring on those trips to the nurseries!

I hope everyone enjoys this issue of the newsletter, and that you're all planning what new thing you'd like to add to your garden this year. For now, hang tight! Gardening season is coming!

Laura Sarson, Editor

Did You Know?

There's a new cherry in town! The **Romance Cherries** were developed right here in Canada at the University of Saskatchewan who licenses their prop-agation. Each plant is cloned and is identical to the original plant. After decades of trials, tests, and selections by various plant breeders, these beautiful deep coloured cherries can now be growing in your yard!

These cherries are a cross between sour cherries (pie cherries) and a Mongolian cherry, which provided the genes that make these trees VERY winter hardy. The trees don't get very big -- typically 6-8 feet tall, so they fit small yards, and you can pick most of the fruit from the ground. Yields are typically 2-3 ice cream pails per tree. They can be grown as single trunked trees but seem to do better as a multi-trunk shrub. But here's the best part. Unlike other "pie" cherries, which are too sour to eat as fresh fruit, these promise to be sweet and juicy enough to eat fresh and delicious in a pie. They also provide a deep red colour that is lacking from the Montmorency variety that most of us grow for pie cherries. They taste great, but some resort to using red food colouring to make the pie more red and less pink. Romance cherries typically begin producing the first fruit in their 4th year, with full production about year 7. Look for names like Cupid, Romeo, Juliet, and Crimson Passion, and you'll know you have a Romance Variety cherry tree.

In This Issue

WHS Roll Call.

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Ask Dr. Fill

Dear Dr. Fill

I love to see hummingbirds in my gardens and I always hang a feeder and I try to plant the tubular shaped flowers that I've heard that they prefer. But I've noticed over the years that for a while each summer, they seem to disappear and then they return again. I assume it's because they find another garden that has flowers that are blooming during that time, or that they've built a nest far from my home and are there caring for their young. Are there any tips that you could offer that would keep my birds in my yard until it's time for them to head south? I really miss watching them when they aren't around. **Sincerely**, **Hummer Lover**

Dear Hummer Lover

Your hummers are likely not in someone else's garden when they stop coming to your feeders and flowers. They are simply being great parents! Hummingbirds will not visit feeders or flowers as often while they are nesting, because they are busy feeding insects to their babies to provide them with needed protein. Their nestling period is typically 18-22 days. As you observed, you'll see more of them once nesting season ends, and while they migrate in the fall, but even while nesting, they will occasionally come in for nectar.

Hummingbirds hunt insects in various ways, so they do remain in your yard, but if you aren't watching for them you might not see them. The first hunting method, called hover-gleaning, is the one you're most likely to see. The birds hover in the air a few inches from a spider web or a leaf and grab the prey with their tongue. They will grab insects caught in a spider's web for a nice snack, but they are really hoping to grab the spider itself. And, of course, female hummers often steal the silk threads from webs to use as the "glue" to hold their fragile nests together.

Their second hunting method is called hover hawking. They hunt much like a swallow – flying high in the air through swarms of insects, picking them off one by one and this makes them harder to spot. They hunt mosquitoes, gnats, and even small bees this way. So this summer, keep an eye out for them away from your feeder, and you may be surprised to see that they are still in your yard! Look early in the morning, which is when they are at their hungriest, and you're sure to spot them hunting insects.

You are correct that they are attracted to red and orange tubular flowers, and seem very fond of cardinal flower, honeysuckle, Penstemon, columbine, hollyhocks, and beebalm. They prefer tubes that face outward, rather than those that hang down. It probably makes it easier for them to hover and drink. Hummingbirds will drink from any colour flower once they learn that they are a source of nectar. The reason they seem to prefer red or orange blooms may be because they see red tones well while insects that need nectar, do not. Therefore red flowers are more likely to be full of nectar when a hummer visits it.

You also might be incorrect that they've nested in someone else's garden. Their nests are, not surprisingly, very tiny and very difficult to find. They are about the size of a large thimble, built directly on top of a branch, rather than in a fork. They are often made of thistle or dandelion down held together with strands of spider silk. The outside of the nest is often camouflaged with bits of lichen and moss.

As a lover of hummingbirds, it's important to choose a hummingbird feeder that's good for the birds – not just pretty to look at. The two most important issues to consider are how easy they are to take apart and thoroughly clean, and how large they are. The best-sized feeders are those that are emptied every day or two by the hummingbirds you have. As you know, when they aren't visiting your feeder as often because they're nesting, the nectar can stay in the feeder too long. Bacteria and mold grow in sugar water, and sugar ferments, so hummingbird water should never be left out for more than two or three days, and changed daily in very hot weather. If not, it becomes toxic.

The easier it is to clean a hummingbird feeder, the more likely you are to do it often and well. The fill hole should be large enough for you to be able to get a bottlebrush inside, and every crevice where mold could be growing should be easy to scrub.

Bee guards (little plastic screens that keep insects away from the sugar solution) on the feeding ports might seem like a good idea, but bee guards are often yellow, which ironically, attracts bees and hornets, so buy feeders without them.

The saucer styles with the feeding ports on top, such as the Hummzinger brand, are growing in popularity as they are really easy to clean, have an ant trap to keep ants out, and have no yellow to attract bees or wasps. But there's one more advantage. Bottle feeders tend to leak in the sun, because air trapped in the top of the bottle expands as it warms and pushes the nectar out. This doesn't happen in tray/saucer style feeders. Either way, avoid locating your hummingbird feeder in direct sun, which causes the sugar solution to spoil even more rapidly.

One more tip is that hummingbirds require water to keep themselves clean. If their feathers become too sticky with nectar, they can't fly. They prefer shallow, moving water, such as in a shallow birdbath with a fountain that circulates the water. Even a birdbath with no fountain, just set slightly askew so that some water can flow over the side as a bird splashes in it, would be appreciated. Hummers also love fountains that

Ask Dr. Fill (cont'd)

spray straight up in the air; they'll flit in and out to "take a shower."

Hope these tips help and that you have lots of beautiful Ruby Throats flitting about in your garden this summer! They're not only fun to watch – they' great at controlling mosquito populations – even when you can't see them! **Dr. Fill**

Welcome Toads!

Many gardeners may think they're not all that keen on attracting toads to their gardens – until they find out that one toad may eat up to 10,000 slugs in a summer! And slugs aren't their only food. They'll also be dining on flies, mosquitoes, cutworms, and moths. Toads can eat up to 200 bugs in one sitting! And toads eat ONLY insects – they won't touch your plants. Suddenly the "Welcome Toads" signs go up!

Attracting and keeping toads in your garden isn't all that difficult. We just need to create a habitat that they find welcoming. In New Brunswick we only have one species of toad – the American Toad. First, we need to provide **protection from predators**. While toads are one of the few predators of slugs, there are lots of critters who would find a toad a tasty meal. Snakes, birds and even the occasional house pet will kill and eat toads. Provide plenty of large leaf foliage for them to hide under, and leave some other potential spots available. Toads make homes under boards, porches, loose rocks and amid the roots of trees. You can provide hiding spots throughout your gardens to encourage them to stay. Some garden decorations claim to be garden toad houses, but most really aren't. They need to have a back door for the toad to escape from any predator at the front door, and most don't. However it's easy to build a great toad house. More on that later, but first, let's make sure your yard is going to encourage them to move in and use that house! Leaving some leaf litter will entice a toad to stay. Many toads are nocturnal. They hide in a protected shady spot during the day. When the sun goes down, the toads come out and feast on insects. Stop cleaning up all of the debris in your garden. The leaf and litter debris provides natural shelter. If you can't stand looking at a messy garden, sweep the debris to an inconspicuous corner of your yard. Plants with large leaves also make good shelters.

Toads need **moisture**. They are amphibians which means that they live on both land and in the water and need moisture to survive. While toads are not as closely tied to the water as frogs, they still need a moist place to live. Toads may not live in water, but they need water to lay eggs, reproduce, and grow as tadpoles. A small pond or ditch that stays filled with water for at least a significant part of the year will not only help with attracting toads, but will help ensure future generations of toads.

If you have a garden pond or want to install one, depth is important. It should be no deeper than 20 inches and no shallower than 8 inches. Install water plants that are native to your area. Toads lay their eggs in strands which they attach to water plants. You will also need to install some sort of ramp for them to be able to get out of the pond once they have hopped in. A simple slab of rock is sufficient as that's what they'd use in the wild. The bottom should be mud. Tadpoles filter feed through the mud looking for algae and other water organisms. Don't introduce fish to your pond. They will eat both the eggs and the tadpoles.

If you really want to treat your toads as the special guests that they are, you can also provide "**drinking water**" even though they won't actually "drink" it; you can use a shallow saucer with enough water for them to submerge themselves in. They will absorb the water through their thin skins rather than swallowing it. Just make sure it's not so deep that they cannot get out, and keep it in a shaded spot close to their house.

This one seems obvious, but it's even more important than we might think. We need to **eliminate all pesticides** and chemicals or your garden will be too toxic for toads. Because they live in both water (as tadpoles) and on land (as adults) , toads are highly sensitive to even tiny amounts of chemicals in both environments, so even small amounts can be damaging to their health, or even deadly. The other factor is that toxins are absorbed through their skin, so they don't need to eat something that is contaminated – they just have to brush against a leaf that has been sprayed. So don't buy lawn and garden chemicals, and the same goes for pre-fertilized soil; toads have had adverse reactions to burrowing in this soil.

Next, we want to insure we don't accidentally harm them by keeping an eye out for them when mowing and whipper snipping and being **careful after dark**. Toads are nocturnal but they are attracted to the lights in your yard and home. They likely know those lights will attract insects. Be careful where you step at night, and always check around your car before driving it. Driveways are killing fields for toads. If there's a toad behind your tire, a little gentle push with your foot will get him hopping away.

A vegetable garden in the beginning looks so promising. But then eventually all you get is vegetables. Just vegetables and more and more vegetables. So many vegetables! Why would anyone want that? ~Gertrude Stein

Toads (cont'd)

They also hibernate underground during the winter. So each fall, pile up some garden debris in an area with soil they can easily burrow into, and leave out a little saucer of water to make them think your yard is a great place to over winter. If no toads spent the winter, leave out the same materials in the spring when they'll be emerging from the ground and looking for a home. Let the toads know that they are welcome in your garden where they will provide you with years of free insect control.

Building a toad house is easy to do, and will help keep toads in your garden. The easiest toad house an old broken terra cotta flower pot placed upside down in a shady spot. It should have an opening large enough for the toad to enter and exit comfortably. If it doesn't have an opening, prop it up on a stone so that the toad can hide underneath. To upgrade his room, make a toad "cave" with a large old terracotta flower pot. Invert the pot and set it on the ground in a **shady** spot. Lay the pot on its side and partially bury it so the toad will be resting on the soil that's within. Enlarge the drainage hole on the bottom as an escape exit. Make sure the cut edges around the drainage hole are totally sanded smooth (a metal file will work for that). Add some soft dirt and some leaf litter inside to act as "bedding material" for the toad and to show him that he can dig here.

You can also make a stone toad hole. In a shady spot near water, excavate a hole 25 cm (10 inches) square by 25 cm(10 inches) deep. Fill it with soft soil topped with a layer of moist, rotting leaves, for summer bedding and winter hibernation. Build walls and a roof over it using several large, flat stones. Leave an opening in the front and back for entry and exit.

There are a few plants that toads seem to avoid, so if you want to build a toad house, don't plant these nearby! Toads will avoid your house if daffodils, hyacinths, azaleas, hydrangeas or honeysuckle are growing near by.

And don't worry that you're your toads will wander off looking for better accommodations. Toads have a homing instinct! Once they reach adulthood and stray from the breeding pool they grew up in, they find a place that's comfortable to burrow in and that has plenty of bugs. When they find it, they rarely leave. So if you can entice them to visit your yard they'll likely make your garden their permanent home. And your battle with slugs may finally be over!

Recipe of the Month - Roasted Radish

Spring is on the way, and all gardeners know that radishes will be one of the first crops you'll be harvesting. And typically, we end up with a lot more radishes than we can use up at one time. So instead of just slicing them up for your salads, why not try them roasted? They're delicious and nutritious and are easy to turn into a great side dish. Radishes are full of vitamins A, B6, C, E, and K, as well as potassium, fiber, antioxidants, magnesium, and iron. Roasting makes them taste a bit milder than they do raw, and they have a texture similar to a roasted potato. In fact they make a great low carb replacement for roasted potatoes.

Before roasting radishes, wash and trim them, removing the roots and the green tops. Cut them in half. Add some finely chopped onion. Toss them in olive oil and season them with a bit of sea salt, black pepper, smoked paprika, garlic powder, and onion powder. Spread the radishes on a tin foil lined baking sheet in a single layer, which allows them to brown well. Place them into a 425 oven for 15 to 20 minutes, depending on the size of your radishes, turning halfway through. You can pierce roasted radishes with a fork to check the desired doneness. It should go in with virtually no resistance. Roasted radishes are done when they are soft inside, like potatoes. Once they are finished cooking, sprinkle them with just a bit of extra sea salt.

You can change it up once in a while by adding some fennel seeds for a subtle sweet flavour. If you like garlic or rosemary on your roasted potatoes, you'll love them on your roasted radish!

Plants for Pollinators

The issues around gardeners choosing TRULY pollinator friendly plants is ridiculously complex, but most gardeners are aware that some of our pollinators are in trouble and we want to help if we can. Populations of many species of bees, butterflies and hummingbirds are in serious decline. You've likely seen a lot of articles in gardening magazines about the need to plant a "pollinator friendly" garden where you avoid pesticides and offer a variety of bloom times and bloom types. Those are great tips, but there's another layer of protection that many gardeners aren't even aware of. Some of the traits that humans find attractive in new hybrids and cultivars, such as double flowers or an unusual colour, may make the flower less attractive to pollinators, and furthermore, may decrease the quantity, quality, and accessibility of the nectar and pollen rewards.

Most of us know that the new hybrids of many of our most loved flowers are now bred to be sterile. Those beautiful new varieties of coneflower, coreopsis, and rudbeckia won't reseed in the garden the way our older varieties

We think that diamonds and gold and platinum are very important. We call them precious minerals. But the minerals that feed our plants –magnesium, potassium, calcium -they are the truly precious ones ~Wangari Maathai

Plants for Pollinators

did. However, scientists are now discovering a new problem with many of these flowers. And it's not just the effect on our pocketbooks (these new plants can be pricey!). It appears that it affects our birds and bees. These flowers may still attract pollinators with their bright new colours (or they may not… more about that later!) but sadly, the pollinators are sometimes only getting about 15 to 20% of the nectar energy that they expect to get from that particular flower. And just recently a new question has arisen. Is it possible that these new hybrids could get cross pollinated with a native species that many pollinators rely on as a food source? If so, that means that fields of wildflowers that sustain nectar feeders could slowly become a useless source of food without us realizing it. And as gardeners, we have no way of knowing whether a new cultivar of an old favourite will be able to act as a host plant to the beneficial insects that once thrived in our gardens on the "original version".

Unfortunately not all cultivars are the same, so for now, it's very difficult to know what to buy and what not to buy for a TRULY FRIENDLY pollinator garden. For example, we all know that butterflies and bees are drawn to our old traditional purple coneflowers. Now they've been bred to create brand new colours and brand new bloom shapes and sizes. Many of these cultivars have no benefit to pollinators. Others which were bred with double flowers or with flowers on top of flowers on the same stem cause bees to struggle for many minutes to find their way to the centre, only to arrive and find no pollen and no nectar. If those are the only type you have in your garden, you may be thinking that you're helping the population because the plants are buzzing with bees and butterflies, drawn there by the colour. Sadly, they're starving trying to find a flower with the needed pollen and/or nectar. To date, no one has studied the countless new hybrids to learn which ones have more nectar, which ones have less, and which ones have none at all. The chances of this information ever being put on a plant label seem pretty remote. In the coneflower study, the green one called 'green jewel' proved to be much less visible to pollinators, so at least they weren't being drawn to it and then flying away with no food reward, The cultivar known as 'pink double delight' does not produce pollen and with its strange "coneless" form, its nectar is inaccessible to birds and bees. On the other hand, the coneflower sold as 'magnus', which was bred to produce far more blooms on one plant, but with the same "coneflower" shape, is little changed from the native species and is still a great choice for a pollinator friendly garden.

There have been several new varieties of ninebark on the market for the past few years which were bred for foliage in various shades of red and gold and chartreuse. They apparently weren't necessarily bred to be more insect resistant, but it turns out they are. The cultivar 'Monolo' with deep red leaves was avoided by the ninebark beetle (which would make most gardeners happy) and the cultivars 'Dart's Gold' was preferred by them (which is not so good!). Researchers speculate that because their dark red foliage seems to be high in compounds which seem to be poisonous to plant eating animals and insects, the beetles avoided those shrubs. However, they also speculate that it is probably toxic to any number of beneficial insects as well, and that's where it becomes tricky. The worst part is this: these ninebarks are often sold as "native plants" and "beneficial to pollinators" – which the ORIGINAL NATIVE PLANT was. The new ones may actually be toxic! This area of research is so new that right now it's often just a guess, and it's usually not an area of research that plant breeders are necessarily interested in pursuing when profits are at stake.

Several PhD students are currently studying many aspects of the use of cultivars and hybrids versus native species and their research is interesting, and somewhat scary. They are finding that bees are more likely to visit the native species over the cultivar in most (but not all) cases. They are also studying specific plants available for sale in nurseries and are just beginning to publish those results. For example, they found that 'Fan Scarlet' , a new cardinal flower may perform nicely in the garden and may lure hummingbirds to its bright red tubular flowers, but these pollinators are being rewarded with less than 20% of the nectar energy that they would find in the native species, Lobelia cardinalis. And if you grow the native cardinal flower, you know that it didn't really need any improving! It's a show stopper just the way it was!

So how do you know what is environmentally a "good choice" when you're shopping for new plants? It's not always possible to know! This area of research into the impact of new hybrids is very new and there are absolutely no rules around labelling plant tags with any information on this. There seem to be a few **general rules for those who want to keep their gardens "TRULY pollinator friendly".**

1) If it has double blooms that seem to totally hide the centre where the pollen and nectar can be collected, you might want to choose a different flower. Some consider it an absolute no-no as they prevent bees from accessing their food while wasting all their

Plants For Pollinators

strength in trying to get at it. Wild flowers are often "open-faced", shaped to provide a landing platform for visiting insects or to force them to brush against anthers and stigmas and that's what we should aim for in the cultivated flowers that we buy.

If it's a plant that was bred to create a new colour, it is USUALLY less attractive to pollinators than the "original" variety, but if it's in shades of pink, purple, yellow, or white, this is likely not an issue. These are the colours that are most easily seen by bees. They are much less likely to find flowers in your garden that bloom in shades of green or orange – even if they are high in nutrient rich nectar.

They are also drawn in by scent, so new hybrids with little perfume make it hard for bees to find them – even if they are rich in pollen and nectar. If however their new cultivated trait is just a larger flower or shorter height at maturity, they are likely fine. The bottom line is that, when you can get your hands on the straight species, rather than a hybrid that has changed the bloom shape significantly, you're going to have the best possible plant for your pollinators. Of course, it does remain true that for disease resistance or longer bloom periods the hybrids give gardeners what they want. So perhaps the bottom line is that if you want to help the pollinators but still grow plants that are less prone to mildew or that bloom for a longer period, that it's best to have a lot of cultivars and hybrids that were bred with the traits you want that keep your gardens healthy, but to avoid the ones that were bred for more complex blooms that are "hiding" the pollen.

If possible, try to limit the use of cultivars to open-pollinated seed-grown selections of the native species. Cultivars that differ significantly in colour and bloom shape from the native species should be used cautiously.
There is little doubt that we can still have a spectacular flower garden AND help the bees – if we're willing to just follow these few simple rules.

Growing Asparagus

Growing asparagus requires patience but the payoff sure is worth it. Although it can take up to three years to really get established enough for you to have an ongoing harvest, this perennial plant will produce a bountiful harvest year after year for up to 30 years. And to top it off, the plant itself is really pretty in your garden, with a long feather-like top that turns a beautiful golden colour in the fall and makes a powerful statement in your garden.

While you can grow asparagus from seed, most of us opt for purchasing crowns which speeds up the time until the first harvest, and avoid the tedious weeding necessary when it's coming up from seed. It's important to prepare your planting area well as it will be growing there for many years! Asparagus likes soil that is nearly pH neutral and that drains well. Poor drainage is a killer for asparagus. Many local gardeners will create raised beds for their asparagus. Building 2 x 8 raised beds that will hold about 14 asparagus plants is a popular option. That will give a family a good supply of this spring treat. If you are going to grow asparagus in with other vegetables, plant it on the north or west side of the garden so that it will not shade other vegetables.

Plant asparagus crown in spring at about the same time you would plant potatoes, but don't rush to plant them if your soil is still cold.

Planting the crowns is a bit like planting a rose bush. You want to mound up soil in the centre of a hole and allow the roots to hang down over the edges. As with roses, work compost into the soil and add some good organic fertilizer and mix it in well. If you're planting in raised beds, dig two furrows about a foot deep. Make you mounds about 6 inches tall at the bottom of the furrow and leave lots of space between each cone shaped mound – about 18 inches give them lots of space to grow.

Once you've placed your crowns over the mound, cover them without about an inch of soil and keep it moist but not wet.

Keep weeds out of the bed so that there's no competition for the asparagus as it starts to grow. A good layer of mulch will help a lot.

Keep adding more soil as the plants grow until the furrow are filled to ground level with the soil.

While it will be tempting, don't harvest for two years. Let the spears grow into ferny plants and develop good, deep roots. Harvest new asparagus crops for four weeks in year three and for six to eight weeks in year four and on.

Asparagus plants are either male or female. There are some varieties such as Jersey Knight and Jersey Giant that produce all male plants so that they are more productive. Choose an all-male variety if you want a bigger yield. If you have female plants, don't allow too many of the berries to drop and self-seed. They can literally strangle out the other plants in the bed.

After the harvest, allow your plants to grow to replenish nutrients. Wait until the foliage has turned brown in the fall, and then cut down the stalks to 2 inches.

Fertilize your established crowns in spring and fall using a rich organic fertilizer such as seaweed extract or add lots of good compost.

When asparagus plants are ready for harvesting, cut off new

Growing Asparagus

spring shoots when they reach about 8 inches in height. Use a clean and sharp knife to cut just below the soil line. Do not harvest spears once the plant has begun to develop foliage. To keep this from happening, harvest every other day. Plants will produce anywhere from 2 to 8 weeks depending on their maturity and strength. Keep harvesting until the spear diameter measures the size of a pencil.

There are 2 final points worth noting. Starting asparagus from one-year-old crowns gives you a year's head start over seed-grown plants. Two-year-old crowns are sometimes sold, and are usually not a bargain. They tend to suffer more from transplant shock and many gardeners have found that they won't produce any faster than one-year-old crowns. Secondly, starting with a weed free bed, and keeping it weed free is crucial. Asparagus roots form such a dense mat once the patch is established that pulling weeds without damaging the roots is nearly impossible. If you don't mulch anywhere else, seriously consider mulching your asparagus.

Why is it worth finding a spot in your garden to grow asparagus? Asparagus fresh from your garden is soooo much better than what you can find in a store. It's not only attractive as it's growing, it is also one of the most nutritionally well-balanced vegetables around. It is loaded with folic acid and also offers a good amount of potassium, fiber, thiamin and vitamins A, B6, E, K, and C, and contains both soluble and insoluble fiber.

And while gardeners tend to be happy people anyway, asparagus can make us even happier! It contains folate, a B vitamin that has been linked to reducing irritability and also contains a great deal of the amino acid called tryptophan that has been shown to have a positive impact on mood.

Did You Know?

Weeping birch trees such as Summer Cascade Weeping River Birch can make a statement in 2 ways; Leave the branches unpruned, and they'll sweep the ground, creating a secret hiding place for the kids to discover. Or, you can choose to trim the branches to form its typical umbrella shape to show off this specimen's marvelous bark.

The ninebark shrub got its name because the bark appears to have nine layers when it peels away from the trunk, which gives the shrub its unique appearance. If you've never grown a ninebark and see one starting to peel its bark, it's easy to assume that the tree is dying. But fear not – that is its normal growth habit.

Who is Granny Smith and why is there an apple named for her? There are a couple of different versions of the story but they all agree that they got their name from an Australian woman named Maria Anne Smith, who had the nickname Granny Smith. After her husband died, Maria Smith took over the family orchard. Around 1868 in New South Wales, Mrs. Smith had dumped a crate of old rotten apples in her garden and then later found an apple sapling growing there. The tree grew to produce green tart apples "that had never grown before." They quickly became a popular apple in Australia and soon were being shipped all over the world. Since apple seeds often produce unexpected trees, this story makes sense. And of course, because apple trees don't come true from seed, every Granny Smith apple tree since then all come from that original tree, and were produced by grafting.

Who was Bing and why does he have a cherry named after him? Bing cherries are named for an orchard foreman named Ah Bing, who together with cherry farmer and the orchard owner, Seth Lewelling, developed this delicious dark red variety in the late 1800s in Oregon. The story goes that Lewelling named the cherries in Bing's honour after he had spent 30 years grafting trees to produce what many consider the "perfect" cherry.

Who was Bartlett and why does he have a pear named for him?

This story is a bit strange as Bartlett had nothing to do with developing this popular pear variety.

This pear was first discovered in 1765 by a schoolmaster in England named Mr. Stair, and the pear became known as the Stair's Pear. It was so delicious that a nurseryman named Williams bought the rights to it and renamed it the Williams pear. In the early 1800's the Williams pear came to the U.S. where they were planted on the grounds of Thomas Brewer of Massachusetts. Later, Enoch Bartlett of Dorchester, Massa-chusetts acquired the Brewer estate. Not knowing the identity of the trees, Bartlett propagated and introduced the variety to the United States under his own name. It was not until much later when new trees arrived from Europe, that it was realized that Bartlett and Williams pears were one and the same. By then it was too late... the variety had become widely popular in the U.S. under its adopted name: the Bartlett.

If you grow sour cherries for pies and baking, chances are you grow the **Montmorency** variety which are very cold hardy. These cherries are not named for a person but for the region in France where they were first grown.

When you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for the moment. Most people rush around so, they have no time to look at a flower. I want them to see it whether they want to or not. That is why I paint. -Georgia O'Keefe

Society News

We had a good turnout at our February meeting where members and guests were fortunate to hear our amazing guest speaker, **Alyson Chisholm**, owner of the 45 acre Windy Hill Organic Farm in McKees Mills. Alyson shared many tips about growing food organically while still dealing with pests and disease. She stressed the need to rotate crops, if at all possible, and to learn about the life cycle of insect pests so that we can deal with them before they do too much damage.
Alyson sells her organic fruits and vegetables through the CSA program (**C**ommunity **S**upported **A**griculture) which allows people to order baskets of fresh produce to be delivered throughout the growing season, as they are ready for harvest. She also sells her produce at the Dieppe Farmer's Market and runs a produce store at her farm.

Our March meeting was cancelled due to the concerns over Corona Virus. We certainly want to keep all of our members healthy and with the suggestions about self quarantining, we thought this was the best option. We have been in touch with **Conrad Allain** from **TransAqua** who was scheduled to be our guest speaker in March, and we are hoping that we can have him come and talk to us at a future meeting. Many members were very interested in learning more about the city's composting program, and as part of the technical and operations team since 1995, Conrad spearheaded the design, construction and operation of the composting facility. We'll keep you updated when a new date can be finalized.

Currently our plan to hold a potluck in April is on hold, and we will make a decision about whether or not to go ahead with it based on how the Corona Virus situation develops.

The WHS is looking for members who would be willing to open their gardens to members of our club and possibly for a **garden tour** by a visiting club. We are considering two dates – a spring tour and another later in the summer, as different gardens peak at different times. If you'd be interested in showing off your hard work, or if you know of a gardener who might be open to the idea of sharing their garden with our little group, please do let anyone on the executive know.

Based on the response to our questionnaire, we resumed having a luncheon following our February meeting, and everyone enjoyed some yummy treats.

It was proposed that we hold 50/50 draws as a fundraiser at our meetings. Dave gave an excellent overview of our finances, and we do need to find ways to increase our income. Members are reminded to toss a loonie in the loonie bin if you plan to join us for lunch after a meeting. Those who bring in an item for the lunch, of course, are not asked to do so!

Survey Says…

Members may recall filling in a questionnaire about what we would like to see our club doing in the future. Claudia had planned to share the results of that membership survey at our March meeting, so we'll list them here. There weren't really a lot of surprises, but a good overview of where we should go moving forward! As always, we welcome your input and suggestions for guest speakers and topics.

What do you like about the WHS? . .
•Friendship among the members
•Meeting fellow gardeners
•Friendly atmos-phere/nice people. .
•Good exchange of gardening ideas and information, and being able to ask questions
•Bus tours/ garden tours/club outings
•Plant auction . .
•Interesting speakers and seminars
•Great newsletter

What would you like to see changed?
• Enjoy present format; no complaints
• More questions and answers
• More individual participation, members could share more knowledge and tips
• Start meetings at 6:30,
• Start meetings at 7:30
• More interaction with other garden clubs
• Have more seminars, more garden tours, more visits to areas of interest

Places you would like our club to visit?
• Cornhill Nursery (5 responses)
• Kingsbrae Gardens in St. Andrews (3)
•Other clubs' gardens/local gardens(3)
• Ryan Road Organic Farm
•Les Jardins de la Republique, Edmundston
• Various garden centres/nurseries
• Speciality gardens ex. Lutz Garden in Hampton, Truro Ag College, Lavender farm

Speakers/Topics You would like at future meetings?

•Garden care, organic pest control
• Benefits of tree pruning
• Indoor plants/orchids
• Hummingbirds (how to attract, best feeders, etc.)
•Water features/ landscaping in general
•How to establish and maintain an orchard
•Organic vegetable growing/mulching
• Growing garlic
• Garden art/ how to 'decorate' a garden

Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad!