

# Gardening Newsletter



“The Friendly Garden People”  
Growing Since 1928

www.whsociety.ca



## Branching Out



The WHS welcomes new members. 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

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, **March 24** when our guest speaker will be Conrad Allain, designer and operator of Moncton's composting facility. See more details on page 8,



## Did You Know?

According to English folklore, if a person finds nine **peas** in a pod, the next eligible partner that comes along will be their husband or wife.

During World War II, when penicillin and sulfa drugs were scarce, **garlic** was used as an antiseptic to disinfect open wounds and prevent gangrene.

The earthy smell after rain hits the ground is called **petrichor**.

## From The Editor

We've certainly had our share of cold and snow so far this year, and I'm a bit jealous of our lucky members who are somewhere on a sunny beach or hanging out on a cruise ship right now!

My first seed catalogue arrived in mid-January, so that somewhat brightens the cold winter days as I dream of some of the new perennials I would like to try this year. If you're planning next spring's flower beds, check out what will be new in perennials in 2020 on page 7.

For the very astute members, some of you may have noticed that this issue of the newsletter is Volume 18. It's hard to believe that I've been writing these articles for 18 years now. But for the even more astute among you, did anyone notice that for the past 18 years, the top of each issue stated that we'd been "growing since 1932"? Turns out we're even older than we'd originally thought! We have received information from a family member of someone who won a prize for their entry in a WHS garden show back in 1928! So our little garden club has been meeting now for at least 92 years! I plan to do a bit of research to see if I

can find any other garden club in Canada that has been in existence for that length of time. I suspect that if there are others, we certainly must be among the top 5 - something we should be very proud of.

I always like to include a little gardening quiz in the winter issues of the newsletter, so grab a pencil and try the one on page 6. And even though Mariette is sunning herself in Florida, she submitted her article which you'll find on page 3. Thanks Mariette!

At our last meeting of the executive, we discussed some of the reasons why our membership may be falling off lately. We all know that these days, if someone wants to know how to grow a particular plant, they can simply Google it and find enough info to make their head spin. But I would argue that new gardeners would not be aware of the many pitfalls of this type of research. If they read an article that says to plant your tomatoes by April 30, they may not understand growing zones, and not realize that the author lives in Zone 8- not Zone 5. If they read that they should add acidifying fertilizer to their

azaleas, they may not realize that for the most part, our local soil is already acidic enough. Not only that, the friendships made in our club are well known. Our garden tours, bus tours, potlucks, plant sales, and monthly meetings with our amazing guest speakers give us all a chance to get "expert" advice from REAL experts - local gardeners who have been growing these crops for decades. So if we've broken any of the New Year's resolutions we made last month, or if we haven't made one yet, here's one I encourage all WHS members to consider. Vow to bring in one new member in 2020. Spread the news about our club. Explain the unique advantages of local advice versus google articles which are often filled with some really bad advice. Invite your neighbours. Invite your friends. Let's keep this club around for another 92 years!  
**Laura Sarson, Editor**



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## Ask Dr. Fill



**Dear Dr. Fill**

This isn't really a gardening question, but since many gardeners feed birds, I'm hoping you can help! While watching birds at my feeders, a question occurred to me. Can birds who speak to each other through their songs understand the songs of other species, or just their own?

**Sincerely**

**A Curious Bird Watcher**



**Dear Curious Bird Watcher**

You've asked a very interesting question and the answer is sort of yes and no. Birds make sounds for various reasons and those sounds can be divided into **calls** and **songs**. Songs are likely only understood by other birds in the same species, as there is no reason for other birds to need to understand them. Songs are used to attract mates. A male bird might sing loudly to impress a female bird, or to show other male birds that he is bigger and tougher and too much competition for them to even bother trying to attract the female bird. They might also sing songs that announce that this is my territory – I've found food and water and shelter, and I'm singing my "No trespassing" song. Since other species likely don't have the same "wish list" for a good territory, this song would be of no interest to them.

However when it comes to bird **calls**, it's a different story! Many birds have "alarm calls" that other birds DO understand. For

example, bird experts have noticed that there are at least 50 different types of birds that "speak chickadee". They may pay no attention to the "chick-a-dee" call, but when they hear the "chick-a-dee-dee-dee-dee" alarm, they'll know there is a predator in the area. This particular call, with the string of "dee-dee-dee" notes at the end, is used to warn about a perched predator rather than one in flight, and other chickadees, nuthatches, jays, and other birds will all respond by flying in to make a racket and "mob" the perched predator. While it may seem odd that dozens of tiny birds will fly TOWARDS a perched hawk when they hear this alarm, their plan works. They know that a perched hawk isn't as threatening as one in flight, and they seem to be saying, "We all know you're here and there's no point in you hanging around because you won't catch us now." When they all start calling out loudly, the hawk will fly away. Chickadees add on additional dee-dee-dee notes at the end of the call, based on the importance of the alarm. More -dees mean a higher threat. So a perched Northern Pygmy-Owl (which specializes in hunting small birds) may have a chickadee adding as many as 12 extra dees to the end of the alarm call.

If the predator is in flight overhead, rather than perched near by, the chickadees send out a very different call, which again, many species of birds understand. It's a high pitched "seeet" call. You may see them feeding and

chattering away, then all of a sudden their chirps just stop and you might see birds diving into cover; if you listen carefully, you'll likely hear this "seeet" alarm. If it stays quiet, then you (and other birds) know the hawk is nearby. If they quickly go back to their chattering, one of them probably had seen a hawk, or even a crow, off in the distance and sent out the alarm, but when the hawk flew off, the threat was over. Once you learn how to speak chickadee, it can be fun to look around when you recognize this alarm call and try to spot the predator threat – but keep in mind, they sometimes put out the alarm call when the hawk is 400 feet away so we might not even see it! Many other species of birds make this very similar "seeet" call, and it is recognized by dozens of species as the universal "Look Out!" In fact, researchers have played recordings of various alarm calls in forests far outside the range of the birds who made the calls, and the local birds immediately respond by freezing or hiding. It seems that they speak nuthatch, even if there are no nuthatches within a thousand miles!

Chickadees are among the most interesting birds we have in our area when it comes to vocalization. When you go outside and see a little flock of them, you're sure to notice that they're almost always chattering away to each other. Birders believe this is likely because they are fairly small birds and when they're in thick firs or spruce, it's hard for them to see one another so they've come up with this strategy of constantly

chattering away while they feed and move about their territories to be sure all members of the flock are safe.

In fact, their calls are what many of us might consider language. Researchers have carefully observed chickadees and recorded their calls, and have concluded that there are numerous differences that they are still trying to understand. They know that the length of the "dee" notes, after the chick-a-dee dee calls seems to indicate the size and position of the predator – shorter "dee" notes seem to indicate a bird with a larger wing span, and longer dee notes seem to warn of birds with shorter wing spans and more speed!

Thanks for the really interesting question!

**Dr. Fill**



## Did You Know?

Spiders may be the smartest thing in your garden! New research on spiders has revealed that their brains are so large that they fill their body cavities and overflow into their legs! Harvard and Cornell neurologists have discovered an average spider's brain possesses a tremendous mental capacity. According to the study, if a spider's brain didn't lack a cognitive lobe, they might be more intelligent than Einstein!

There are 3 types of **spinach**. Savoy has large, deeply crinkled leaves that are notoriously difficult to clean. Flat leaf spinach has smooth leaves, and a small leafed variety of this is sold as "baby spinach". Semi-savoy is a cross of the two – with slightly crinkled leaves.

## Nothing But Praise!



**Editor's Note:** If we ever give a WHS award to the most dedicated member, I would nominate Mariette! She is enjoying the beautiful sunshine in Florida but took the time to submit her article before she left. Thanks Mariette! Enjoy the sunshine!

The 1st meeting with the new executive was Tuesday, November 26 at the Mapleton Rotary Lodge. There were 36 people present and Denise Trembath became our latest member. Welcome, Bienvenue, Denise. There is presently 45 paid members ( I should say, 46 with me in April!)

Laura Sarson was presented with a bouquet of flowers for doing 2 seminars, free of charge. We learned that the W.H.S. planned to have T-shirts and baseball caps made for next spring's gardening season. The club thanked Carol Thibodeau for auditing the books again this year.

Claudia talked to us about the lunch. The executive had received feedback that members, including me, missed the lunch since it is an opportunity to socialize. We took a note on whether or not to have the lunch and the majority of the members voted to have the lunch back. There are just 6 meetings when we have a lunch so every member should at least bring lunch once during the year. I would like to mention that the executive provided the

lunch after the November meeting.

Claudia was our special guest speaker. She had a W.H.S. membership survey on some ideas to improve the society. The first question on the survey was to name 3 things you like about W.H.S. The second was 3 things you would like to see change and the 3rd was 3 places you would like to visit or 3 topics you would like presented. I saw the results of the survey and there was a lot of positive comments about how the society is functioning. There were a lot of suggestions for future topics and places to visit. Our new President is really looking for ways to improve the club. I have nothing but praise and admiration for her. A very smart lady!

In September, Claudia and her husband Fernand Daigle visited Switzerland and they saw some spectacular flowers. So, she took many pictures during her trip and gave a short presentation (slide show) on Blooms and Flower Boxes in Switzerland. There was a lot of beautiful houses with many window boxes. It is really a beautiful country and the members had a lot of questions after the presentation.

A spider plant was donated by Mrs. Katherine Barnes and the winner was Betty Vick.

The Christmas potluck was Tuesday, December 10th at the beautiful Lutz Mountain Heritage Museum. I really love that new location for the potluck as there is plenty of parking, no steps, a

great kitchen and a meeting room full of beautiful antiques. The door opened at 5:00 with a lot of volunteers who helped to set up. From 5:15 to 5:45, many members made their own floral centerpieces, at a cost of \$5.00 with the society covering the rest of the cost. Those centerpieces decorated the tables during the potluck, and then we took them home. I would like to thank Claudia for teaching and helping us learn how to make those beautiful centerpieces. Mine decorated my table at Christmas and received a lot of excellent comments from my relatives. A big thank you to her husband, Fernand Daigle, for bringing lots of branches, pine, spruce, cedar, etc. Claudia had a very nice assortment of decorations and beautiful flowers to put into that centerpiece.

The potluck was really excellent. Again, I must have gained 5 pounds with all those delicious desserts. For those who wanted to participate, there was a gift exchange at a value of \$10. to \$15.00. Many thanks to Betty Vick for organizing it.

Anita VanBuskirk gave 6 pairs of gloves for us to give away as door prizes. They were special gloves as she said to me that if you are cold outside, well, you wear the gloves, and if you are hungry, you can eat the big decorated chocolate bar that she had put inside the gloves. Wonder what she will think of next year as she always gives away something as door prizes.

Quite a generous and talented lady.

There was a PowerPoint presentation of the various gardens we visited this past year. We finished this beautiful evening with John Foster who played piano and led us in a carol singalong. It was a great evening and I really enjoyed it. I would like to mention that everybody was thrilled to see our friends Jim and Judy Steeves at the potluck.

During the last year, I sent 17 cards, the last one was a Get Well card for Mr. Garth Berry.

Hope you enjoy the following joke.

An elderly Irishman bought a sports car to recapture his youth and drove at 120 mph. Then he saw a police car behind him, blue lights flashing. "I'm too old for this nonsense," he thought so he pulled over. The police officer said, "Sir, my shift ends in 10 minutes. If you can give me a good reason why you were speeding, I'll let you go". The old man said "Years ago my wife ran off with a policeman. I thought you were bringing her back". "That'll do", said the policeman.

Since I won't be here in March, Happy St. Patrick's Day!  
**Mariette Lanteigne Sharpe**



### Did You Know?

While watermelon is 92% water, the other 8% is packed with nutrients!

Watermelons are native to tropical Africa.

## Earthworms: A Gardener's Best Friend



Most gardeners know that seeing earthworms in your soil as you dig in your garden is a wonderful thing. It seems that every few years, researchers find some new benefit that these little creatures provide. And if you've ever checked the cost of a bag of earthworm casting fertilizer at a garden centre, you'll know that protecting them in your garden is a very good idea!

It's very impressive that they weigh on average only around 1/30 of an ounce, but they can regularly move two-ounce stones, which is about the same as a 150-pound human moving a 9,000-pound boulder. But it's what they do for our plants that is REALLY impressive.

People have likely been aware of how beneficial earthworms are for a thousand years, but Charles Darwin was the first scientist to study the activity of earthworms in a systematic way and to observe in detail the conversion of dead plant material by worms into soil organic matter. In the late 1800s, he published his book called *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms with Observations in their Habits*. It's likely never going to be made into a Hollywood movie, but it proved why we should protect them at all costs.

Earthworms are essential in creating good soil and in recycling organic waste. They are a part of a network of organisms that turn refuse into nutrient rich soil. But those nutrients are just one of the benefits of worms for plant growth. There are so many other reasons that we need to lure them into our gardens.

First, **earthworms help create humus**, which is that dark brown-black type of soil that holds important nutrients in place for plant growth. The worms feed on manure, grass, dead leaves and roots, as well as the soil. Their digestive system concentrates the minerals and organic compounds, so its poop becomes richer in available nutrients than the soil around them had originally. Those castings are the fertilizer your plants will use to thrive. The nitrogen in their poop is a type that is readily available to plants, and when they die, the body of a worm decomposes rather quickly, which further contributes to the nitrogen content of the soil.

But it's not just Nitrogen – they also provide the P in the NPK. Several studies of earthworm casts found that they release four times more **phosphorus** than what was in the surface soil.

Secondly, they create burrows and **tunnels**, and those tunnels provide a more conducive environment for plant root growth. The tunnels allow roots to penetrate

deeper into the soil, where they can reach extra moisture and nutrients. Earthworm tunneling can also help incorporate surface applied lime and fertilizer into the soil.

Thirdly, thanks to those tunnels they leave as they burrow through our soil, they are also **improving drainage**, and for those of us in the Moncton area who are gardening in clay soil, we all know that we need to improve drainage to have any success at all in our gardens.

Some researchers claim that soil with earthworms drains as much as **10 times faster** than soil without earthworms. There have been several articles in past issues of this newsletter on why we should consider not getting out those big noisy tillers every spring. In zero-till soils, where worm populations are high, water infiltration can be up to 6 times greater than in cultivated soils!

They also **improve our soil structure**. The casts of earthworms help to cement the soil particles together. These sticky substances "glue" the mineral particles together and, at the same time, in a kind of mutual relationship, the mineral particles help to protect the organic matter, to some extent, from microbial attacks.

Those of us who have seen pictures of the "dust bowl" during the great depression know how important it is that we don't lose those few

precious inches of top soil. A great quote (attributed to numerous authors) says that "we owe our very existence on earth to a few inches of topsoil and the fact that it rains." Since it is the soil structure that determines its resistance to erosion and whether future human generations will have any soil at all, it's easy to see just how important the earthworms are. Research conducted on farms found that the most productive pastures contained up to 7 million worms per hectare, weighing 2.4 tons. They also discovered a close correlation between pasture productivity and total worm weight.

There has also been a lot of research into how their castings provide a buffer for plant roots to the pH levels in the soil and recent experiments seem to be showing that they release chemicals which attach to plant roots to help reduce transplant shock.

Those of us who have tried lasagna gardening (aka no dig beds) we know that we just scatter the organic materials on the surface, and allow the earthworms to do our digging for us. If you didn't love them before, this technique of gardening will have you sending them chocolate and flowers on Valentine's day!

So by now, you may be thinking, "How can I get more earthworms in my garden?" It's actually not that difficult!

The easiest thing you can

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Gardeners love to buy new plants each year, but if the plant is slow growing, and you are getting older, you may want to start with a larger plant. I find myself buying larger plants each year. ~Bill Cannon

## Earthworms (cont'd)

do is add more organic material, because if you don't see the worms there already, it's a sign that your soil is likely compacted and low in organic material. You can add chopped leaves, grass clippings, compost, and animal manure to your garden which will all provide the food your worms need to thrive. They will be attracted by the scent of the decaying organics.

Earthworms prefer damp and cool environments, but not too dry, too wet or cold. Add a nice organic mulch to keep these conditions as close as possible to what they need.

Adding nitrogen-rich compost helps worms to thrive, but synthetic nitrogen fertilizers tend to have the opposite effect, repelling or even killing earthworms. Always read the label, and if the fertilizer contains ammonium nitrate, know that it is **HIGHLY toxic to earthworms.** The creatures are very sensitive to chemical and physical changes in the soil, and will quickly leave the salty environment that's created when chemical fertilizers are applied. For that same reason, chemical pesticides are a definite no-no.

And as mentioned before, avoid deep tilling. It not only chops many of them up, it destroys those tunnels, which provide all of the benefits we are seeking.

If your soil is acidic, add lime! Earthworms don't like acidic soils with pH levels less than 4.5. The addition of lime will raise pH while also adding calcium which the worms need.

There are slight differences in the recommended number of worms per square foot, but if you are curious about your garden's population, here's the general rule. Use a garden fork to carefully dig up a section of ground 12 inches by 12 inches and about 6 to 7 inches deep. Place the soil on a tarp and count the number of worms in the sample. If you find ten or more you have a healthy population. There are so many reasons that earthworms are our best friends... we all owe it to them to care for them and protect them.



## Growing asparagus

If you aren't growing asparagus because it takes several years to really get it going, you might want to reconsider. Some crops are simply worth the wait! After all, once your patch is established, you can harvest it for many decades to come. And not only that, those ferny green tops are gorgeous in the summer garden and just as pretty when they turn that warm gold colour in the fall. And, oh yes... there's that delicious flavour!

While you can grow it from seed, most home gardeners buy crowns to

get a small patch established unless they have a greenhouse to start the seeds, and are willing to wait even longer for the first harvest.

The crowns will look like a worn out string mop, even when they are alive and healthy, but they should still look firm and fresh, not withered or mushy and they should smell like asparagus.

In the past, asparagus plants were either male or female. Most new cultivars are all-male and provide a bigger yield.

It is important to find a good spot for your asparagus patch and to prepare the bed ahead of time so that you are ready when you see crowns for sale. Keep in mind that it might be growing there for the next 20-30 years so choose a spot wisely. It likes soil that is pH neutral and with good drainage. You may need to lime the soil in the fall if it's too acidic. Many local gardeners have the best luck when creating raised beds with good soil. If you are going to grow asparagus in with or near other vegetables, plant it on the north or west side of the garden so that it will not shade other vegetables. Asparagus does not demand full sun, but it certainly does need sun.

To prepare the bed, fork some good organic compost into the soil. Dig two 30 cm (12-inch) deep furrows in the raised bed. Mound up loose dirt into cone-shaped piles about 15 cm (6") tall at the bottom of the furrow.

Leave about 45 cm (18") between each cone.

Many gardeners soak their new crowns before planting and some soak them in compost tea to give them an extra burst of energy. Put an asparagus crown on top of each dirt pile in the furrow. The roots should hang down over the dirt pile. Cover the crowns with about 3 cm (1") of soil. Keep the soil moist but do not saturate.

Asparagus plants don't like competition, so keep weeds out while it's beginning to grow. Add more soil as the asparagus continues to grow and continue this process until the furrows are filled to ground level with the soil. Apply mulch at that point to suppress future weeds. Asparagus roots form a tightly woven mat, which makes it impossible to remove a weed intact.

Avoid temptation, and do not harvest for two years. Let the spears grow into ferny plants and develop good deep roots.

Typically you can harvest new asparagus crops for about four weeks in year three and for six to eight weeks in year four and on.

After harvest, allow plants to grow to replenish nutrients. Wait until the foliage has turned brown or yellow in the fall. Cut down to 5 cm (2").

To keep the soil rich and help feed the asparagus plants, top dress the soil annually with compost. You can do this in early



## Garden Quiz

What better way to spend a winter afternoon than pouring yourself a cup of hot tea and taking a little gardening quiz. This month's quiz is all about the terms you see on plant labels. Give yourself a point for each correct answer.

1. Which plant can go longer with no water?

- a) One labelled drought tolerant
- b) One labelled drought resistant
- c) They are both the same - just different wording

2. You are shopping for a new plant to grow on the east side of your home, where it will receive morning sun but will be in shade the rest of the day. Which one of these plant label descriptions is the BEST choice?

- a) full sun
- b) part sun
- c) part shade
- d) full shade

3. You've found a flowering plant at a nursery that you love but the only information on the plant tag is the Latin botanical name. You see the word *sylvestris* in the name. So you should know that: a) It should be planted in a woodland garden b) It is going to grow to be very tall - definitely should go at the back of the border c) It is an annual, not a perennial d) It needs full sun e) its leaves are edible

4. When you see the word Alba in the name of a flowering plant, it means that: a) the blooms will

## Asparagus (cont'd)

spring before the shoots appear, or in the fall after the fronds have died back and been cut to the ground. Asparagus is a heavy feeder and you should also give it a dose of organic fertilizer in mid-spring when it is actively growing.

When asparagus plants are robust enough for harvesting, cut off new spring shoots when they reach about 20cm (8") 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, you may sometimes need to 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.

If you notice a decline in your asparagus harvests, you may want to divide and transplant your asparagus plants.

Asparagus is highly nutritious. It is loaded with folic acid and also offers a good amount of potassium, fiber, thiamin and vitamins A, B6, E, K, and C. Because we absorb vitamin E better when it is eaten along with some healthy fat - roasting asparagus in olive oil will boost its effectiveness.



## Share Your Aloe Vera

Most gardeners spend the winter dreaming of getting back out to their

gardens, but we can't forget that there are some "indoor gardening" tasks to do. One is transplanting our aloes. Most people who have any houseplants at all have at least one aloe vera plant. They are attractive, low maintenance, and they sure do come in handy when you get a burn while cooking dinner. Break open a leaf and squeeze a few drops of the inner liquid on the burned area and you'll experience instant relief. And perhaps best of all, when a friend asks for a little piece of your plant, it's easy to share! Aloe vera isn't just one of the easiest succulents to grow, it is incredibly prolific too. If you have a large and healthy aloe plant, it won't be long until you see tiny offspring, shooting up from the base - or a dozen of them if you ignore it long enough! These little baby plants are called pups.

To get new aloe plants, wait until they are around 10 cm tall and then pull them and re-pot them. Aloe is a desert plant and prefers well-drained soil, so be sure to choose a potting soil that's specifically for succulents or cactus. A good rule of thumb when choosing pots is to pick one that is the same diameter as the new aloe plant's height and just place one pup in each pot.

Often you can pull the pups out of the dirt without disturbing the mother plant. Simply grasp them as close to the soil as possible and gently pull them out. However, if it's been a

while, you may need to re-pot the mother plant too. If you plan to re-pot the mother plant, pull the entire mass out of the pot. Again, grasp the pups firmly at their base and pull them away from the main plant. You can cut them with a knife or a pair of scissors if the roots are really tangled. Pull off or snip off any dried out leaves.

**The key to successful transplanting** is that you don't want to re-pot them immediately. Succulents need a chance to grow a callous over their root system. Give them a day or two to rest so the roots can heal over. The new aloe pups will be fine unpotted for about a week if you don't get around to repotting in a day or two. Fill your new pots with potting mix; push aside some of the dirt in the middle and wiggle your pup down into it. It shouldn't be further down in the potting mix than where it was on the original plant. Push the dirt down around the base of the aloe plant firmly and don't water your newly planted aloe right away as it often leads to rot. Give it a few days to settle in. Once they're happy in their new pots, only water when the soil is completely dry. Put them in a bright sunny window and in a week or two, they'll perk up and be ready to share with friends.

While the gel of aloe vera plants is often added to smoothies, it's important that you only use the gel of the real aloe vera plant. Other aloe plants are NOT edible.

## Quiz (con'td)

be white..

**b)**The plant will thrive best in a rock garden

**c)**The plant is native to the British Isles

**d)** the plant will have fuzzy or hairy leaves

**5.** You see a plant with only the Latin botanical name on the label. The word "reptans" will tell you that: a) the plant will have thick leaves b) the plant will have a creeping growing habit and spread through your garden c) the plant will turn colour in the fall

**6,** You are looking for a plant that is unlikely to die from winter kill. If you are going to leave one plant on the store shelf, it should be the one labelled: a) Zone 3-6 b) 5-10 c) zone 5-6



## Quiz Answers

**1. a** is correct. Drought tolerant means they are true desert plants whereas drought resistant means they don't want to be watered frequently, but would like a drink during a long dry spell

**2. c is actually the best, but b is close!**

Full sun, which was "answer a", won't be happy there - Those plants need at least 6 hours of direct sun daily and morning sun won't be enough - they want the strength and heat of the afternoon sun

"B" was Part sun - These plants should receive between 3 and 6 hours of direct sun per day - this

plant would likely be fine for your east location, but it does NEED that direct sun to thrive and bloom

"C" was Part shade - These plants also thrive with between 3 and 6 hours of sun per day, but **definitely need shade when the sun is hottest in the afternoon.** This perfectly describes conditions on the east side of a building (It also describes a bed beneath taller trees where direct sun hits in the morning but shade protects plants in afternoon).

"D" was Full shade - Your plant will get too much sun in the morning and will droop and wilt.

**3.** Answer is a) *Sylvestris* means it's a woodland plant and will need that kind of spot in your garden

**4** "a" is correct. The blooms will be white

**5.** "B" was correct. It will creep along the ground

**6.** "B" is best answer. It's the one you'd want to leave on the shelf. It was labelled zone 5-10, so we are at the absolute lower end of its hardiness Zone, so it may survive some winters, provided there's good snow cover, but keep in mind that it would thrive in Zone 8 or 9 or even 10, where it would never go below -6°C in the winter, if it dropped below freezing at all. If you're going to buy a zone 5-10, you're going to want to mulch it REALLY well and protect it a bit in the winter and give it exactly the soil conditions it needs. The best plant you could buy

would be "a" - the one that said Zone 3 - 6. It can handle much colder temperatures than we have here in Moncton, and since it also tolerates up to Zone 6, it can handle nice hot summers. And of course, "c", the one labelled Zone 5-6, would likely also be fine to buy.

**Score:** 5-6 right: Master gardener!

3-4 right: a real green thumb!

1-2 right: Not bad, considering that few of us speak Latin any more!



## What's New For 2020?

While we wait for winter to end, it's a great time to be planning for next spring's first shopping trip to the nursery. Many gardeners have come to love the "proven winners" series of perennials - available at the Superstore garden centres and other nurseries. Here's a few of the new additions that will be available for the first time in retail stores this spring. You can order now on line or wait and check them out in the spring. These are all Zone hardy to the Moncton area.

There are several great new achillea varieties.

**Achillea 'Firefly Amethyst'** Like most achillea, it needs full sun. This is the shortest member of the new Firefly collection. This pink flowering variety is made up of finely textured foliage and sturdy stems. It has a

billowy habit and broader foliage than older achillea plants, but is just as tough and reliable.

Achillea 'Firefly Diamond' is also for a full sun location. It is a bit bigger than 'Firefly Amethyst' and has long lasting ivory white flowers that turn colour slowly as they age for prolonged colour.

**Allium 'Serendipity'** will grow to about 2 feet tall in full or part sun. It is a sport of the 2018 Perennial Plant of the Year, 'Millenium'. 'Serendipity' keeps all the beloved qualities of its parent but adds grey blue foliage which stands out in any garden. It promises to produce a profusion of globe-like flowers in mid to late summer.

If you've ever grown **Brunnera**, then you know that you're going to want every new one that comes along, and there are two new ones this year! Like Jack Frost and the other popular ones from the past few years, these will also need to be placed in a shade bed.

Brunner 'Jack of Diamonds' has much larger leaves than past hybrids and they overlap at the base for a unique effect. They look a bit like a snail's shell. It is similar to 'Jack Frost' with the silver variegation and the dark green veining.

Brunnera 'Queen of Hearts' has even bigger heart shaped leaves but more narrow, intricate silver veining.

If you love bleeding heart but don't have shade, or don't like their relatively

My gardens are like my children - a little wild, hard to control, always changing, but always able to make me smile.

~ D. Simon

## New For 2020 (cont'd)

short bloom time, then you'll want this one! Dicentra 'Pink Diamonds' is an alpine type bleeding heart that should not be confused with your traditional bleeding heart! This is a full sun plant and will not survive in shade or overly wet conditions. The breeders promise that 'Pink Diamonds' will bloom longer than traditional varieties, beginning in late spring and producing flowers until early fall!

No perennial sunny bed is complete without **phlox** but who wants powdery mildew? The breeders of 'Opening Act Pink-a-Dot' say that it is an early blooming and **REBLOOMING** and mildew resistant phlox.



## Upcoming Events

Don't miss our **March 24** monthly meeting when we are so fortunate to have **Conrad Allain** as our guest speaker. Conrad spearheaded the design, construction and operation of the composting facility where so many of us go to get that beautiful free compost and mulch and is recognized internationally as an expert on composting facilities. We want a great turnout for this speaker, so come on out and bring a friend!

## Organic Gardening Seminars

If you grow fruits or vegetables, you will definitely be interested in an upcoming series of seminars presented by this month's guest speaker, so if you attended our meeting,

you'll know that it's going to be highly informative.

**Alyson Chisholm**, owner of the 45 acre **Windy Hill Organic Farm** in McKees Mills, will be giving an organic gardening course on the four Saturdays of March, **March 7, March 14, March 21, and March 28 from 10:00 - 12:30** in Moncton at the Wedgewood Building (1201 Mountain Road, suite 201). The cost for all for sessions is \$130 and includes handouts and a farm tour on the final day. Alyson produces organic fruits and vegetables and keeps a small herd of dairy goats and participates in the CSA program which allows people to order baskets of fresh produce to be delivered throughout the growing season. She also sells her produce at the Dieppe Farmer's Market. She is a member of the NB chapter of the National Farmer's Union, Canadian Organic Growers and is registered with EcoCert's organic certification program.

Anyone interested in signing up for these seminars can phone 525-1128 or email Alyson at office@windyhillfarm.ca or simply speak to her at our February meeting.

## Society News

Our scholarship committee obviously made a very wise choice when selecting our two winners last year. To receive their scholarship, they had to provide a University transcript for proof of completion of their first term. Both of this year's applicants were

attending Dalhousie University's agricultural college and not only did they compete their first semester, they completed it with top honours. We received their transcripts in January and both Isaac Ayer and Andrei David had a 4 point (A+) grade average. Congratulations to these two fine young men and continued success in your studies.

Our executive has been working hard to plan lots of interesting and fun events for the upcoming year. Our **spring potluck** this year is scheduled to be held on **April 28** at the Lutz Mountain Meeting House Museum. More details will follow, but mark the date on your calendars!

We are hoping to have **two garden tours** this year instead of just one, since some gardens are at their peak in the spring, and others come into their own later in the summer. If you have a garden that you'd be willing to include on either tour, contact anyone on the

executive. Every garden, the new or the old, the large or the small, the shaded or the sunny, the vegetable or the flower, the annual or the perennial, the formal or the carefree... each has a special source of inspiration for visitors. If you enjoy seeing other member's gardens, please consider allowing them to come and see yours. Let's make this year's garden tours the best yet!



## WHS Roll Call.

**President:** Claudia Schaerer  
**Vice Pres.** Laura Sarson  
**Secretary:** Gerry Gillcash  
**Treasurer:** Dave McCullough  
**Membership:** Doris Brown  
**Publicity:** Laura Sarson  
**Social Convenor.** - Rebecca Shaffer

**Website/Social Media:** Betty Vick

**Card Convenor:** Mariette Sharpe (Call Mariette if you know of a member who should receive a card 386-4934)

**Newsletter Editor:** Laura Sarson  
lsarson@rogers.com



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If I finish my day with no garden dirt under my fingernails and nothing new learned, it is a day wasted! ~V.Clague