

GARDENNOTES

Issue #88 • Early Spring 2011 • An Information Newsletter For Valued Customers

The Humble Spud

GROWING POTATOES

It's Showtime

starting your vegetable garden

Grow your own groceries we make it easy™

GARDEN AGENDA

FOR EARLY SPRING

Growing Blueberries

pink ones too

NOT JUST A PRETTY POT container plantings

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

groceries at your doorstep



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EVENTS

8th Annual Garden Planning
& Preparation Weekend
March 19 - 20
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- Free seminars
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Presented to help you prepare for a successful gardening season!

Visit us or click here to find seminars & weekend events for all our locations.



Gardeners...

I am so excited! This is the year - I am growing my own groceries!

17 years ago when my husband and I moved into our first little house, I went straight into the garden and removed the raised-bed veggie garden, planting, instead, my favourite perennials! Over time we created a lovely English-style cottage garden.

When I was growing up, my grandparents always enjoyed a massive veggie garden, but their experience and know-how never seemed to rub off on me! So, for me, veggies came from the grocer, not the garden.

I've been re-thinking my garden over the past few years... Last spring my son and I planted a small edible garden in gorgeous resin containers on our deck. Our first venture into edible gardening! Throughout the summer we marveled at the beautiful and tantalizing salad greens, strawberries and kitchen herb garden we planted! As our first-ever crop of veggies grew, so did our confidence! This year, the sky's the limit. We're thinking blueberries, beans, peas, carrots, rhubarb, parsnips..... Goodbye cottage garden! Hello veggie patch!

If you are an experienced veggie gardener, then you know the joy of sharing your healthy harvest with family, friends and neighbours. You also know that there is nothing fresher, healthier or more delicious than what grows from your own garden.

If you are new, like me, to growing your own groceries, take heart. GARDENWORKS is there to help you every step of the way! Our experts love gardening and would be delighted to help you plan out your veggie garden: **WHAT** to do, **WHEN** and **HOW** to do it.

Don't miss our weekend gardening seminars starting in early spring. They're free and each one filled with practical, easy to understand tips, hands-on demonstrations and quite possibly a taste or two!

We look forward to welcoming you back to our garden centres this spring.

Leanne Johnson,
GARDENWORKS, Chief Operating Officer
& "New Veggie Gardener!"



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It's Showtime - *Let the gardening begin!*

By Susan Ware

There is a great sense of satisfaction when you harvest your fresh bounty, and for me – a self-confessed foodie – gardening and cooking go hand in hand.

I love to cook and eat good food, and I grow my own fresh vegetables to indulge my passion! In this mild part of British Columbia we are blessed with a longer growing season than most. Usually we are able to plant a variety of vegetables in the coolness of early spring. The cool daytime temperatures* and occasional light frost yield the sweetest, crispest, most flavourful vegetables around—stretching the summer bounty into an almost year-round feast. These vegetables are often the easiest for the first time gardener to grow.

A wide selection of cool season vegetables is available, including perennials, annual root vegetables and annual leafy vegetables. Some vegetables, at this time of year, are only available as seeds, such as peas, carrots and radishes. You can start seeds indoors or sow directly into the ground or pots just as soon as the ground is free of frost. **For a quick start, many vegetables, such as-mesclun mix, kale, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and many more, can be purchased as starter plants.** These will mature faster and are great for beginners, or those with spatial challenges. I have a small gardening space and save seed sowing for specialty items unavailable in starter plants, such as mesclun and other specialty lettuces.

Here are a few common, easy-to-grow vegetables that will add fresh taste and texture to your table. Mesclun blends are a taste and texture sensation – bitter, sweet, tangy, crunchy and smooth. Try 'Corn Salad' mix, a blend of several small leaf salad greens such as mache and lamb's lettuce, for a mild nutty flavour, while the 'Nicoise' blend has a slightly bitter flavour combined with sweet succulent leaves.

The textures and colours of specialty lettuces are as visually appealing as they are delicious. There are many to choose from, including 'Merlot Looseleaf', a deep red, shiny lettuce. If you're adventurous, try 'Mizuna', a crunchy leaf with a hint of horseradish.

Sugar and snow peas are favourites, as there is no waste: they have edible pods and the tender shoots and tendrils are also great in salads and stir-fries. 'Oregon Sugar Pod', a dwarf variety great in oriental cuisine is delightfully crunchy and delicious.

Start with vegetables your family enjoys, and then get adventurous. Don't hesitate to consult our store experts for all the information you need to grow a successful cool-season vegetable garden. Believe me, there is nothing more wondrous than watching the entire life cycle of a plant from seed to dinner plate!

*Cool-season vegetables thrive when daytime temperatures average between 5 - 10° C warmer than the nighttime temperature. (usually with nighttime temperatures above 4° C.)

GARDEN AGENDA

FOR EARLY SPRING

By Alan R. Reid

Well, another day older and deeper in ... hopefully great spring weather and lots of garden tasks and surprises!

Just as many creatures wake from their winter hibernation, your garden also needs to wake up! Help it along by feeding the soil – there is no better time for this than early spring. Amend the soil around perennials by digging in compost or well-rotted manure and raking it in gently. Sprinkle **GARDENWORKS** 6-8-6 All Purpose Fertilizer around each plant, or choose from our selection of organic amendments such as Sea Soil or Keefer's West Coast Soil Energizer.

At this time it is also prudent to tend to your lawn. For established lawns, it's beneficial to first tackle any moss problems. Lime with a granular lime such as Dolopril, wait 2 weeks, then apply **GARDENWORKS** Moss Control 14-4-8 to the lawn. After 2 or 3 days, when the moss turns brown, it's time to remove the dead moss by de-thatching the lawn.

With the advent of warmer spring-like days, we are almost always in a rush to get out there and plant. So when can we safely plant out our bedding plants? It's difficult to estimate when our last frost will occur, but great early colour that can withstand light frost is arriving right now in our stores. Pansies, ranunculus and hellebores will add life to the spring landscape. Mid-May is a safe time to plant out tender summer annuals such as petunias or impatiens.

A word of warning: don't forget to plan ahead for the whole year when you shop. It's easy to be seduced by all the beautiful perennials that are blooming at this time of year, but remember to leave some space for a summer and autumn show later on.

Feed rhododendrons and azaleas with **GARDENWORKS** 4-12-20 fertilizer four times a year: once before flowering, once right after, six weeks after that and another six weeks after that. This works out to every March, May, July and September. This feeding schedule will supply enough nourishment for the entire year and will increase next year's show and the overall health of the plants.

Of course, this is not all we have to do in the garden at this time. For more information on your specific garden needs or concerns, we have expert staff at our stores to help you. Or click here for topical care sheets that you can download.

Happy gardening!

Not Just a Pretty Pot

By Michelle Tornai

Pots come in many different shapes, sizes and colours and look fabulous grouped together in a collection on your patio or adorning your front entrance to make a statement. Made of clay/ceramic, resin, fiberglass and cedar, versatile containers can be used for annual displays, perennial plantings and even permanent homes for some of your favourite trees and shrubs. Another option, one of the most rewarding, is growing your own food in containers.

What you grow is limited only by the size of the container and your imagination! Vegetables are as easy as annuals or perennials, with the added benefit that your food is pure, wholesome and delicious.

Growing in containers gives you better control over the soil, light, moisture and nutrition of your plants, and it is much easier to relocate a container on a plant dolly than to move a garden bed! Growing your own can also reduce your carbon footprint.



contemporary look and a black speckled finish. Large sizes make them suitable for growing a variety of vegetables.

Cedar planters, a favourite for many years, come in many different shapes and sizes. For easy vertical gardening, add a cedar trellis and grow some runner beans.

An EarthBOX might just be the most practical choice of all, although not as stylish as other options. The EarthBOX is a self-contained vegetable growing system that comes complete with a 57 litre deck box, casters and a self watering reservoir. Ask us to show you how EarthBOX makes veggie gardening in containers easy.

Whether you have limited space to garden, or just love the look of stylish planters, given a sunny spot and containers you love, you can grow your own groceries. It could become deliciously addictive!



Fiberstone planters

As both water and nutrients leach out more quickly in pots, you must start with good-quality container potting soil, use an organic fertilizer solution to feed your plants, and make sure your containers have good drainage.

So let's look at the different choices you have with pots. Clay and ceramic high-fired pots are weather-hardy, come in assorted shapes, styles and colours and are suitable for many different decors. Larger sizes can accommodate an assortment of vegetables and herbs. A planter with a 60 cm (24-in.) diameter will hold a tomato plant with several basil plants growing around the base of the tomato. All you need is some bocconcini cheese and you'll have caprese salad for dinner.

Lightweight planters are increasing in popularity. [GARDENWORKS](#) carries a selection of resin, fiberglass and fiberstone. In our resin planters we have a wide variety of styles, sizes and colours, from black to weathered willow, terracotta, vintage bronze, marble and a new introduction for 2011, blackberry. This container of a deep eggplant shade would look brilliant with a dwarf apple tree planted in it. Our popular terrazzo line of fiberglass planters has a sleek



Resin planters



The Humble Spud

By Alan Reid

Low in fat, Rich in vitamin C, a good source of iron, vitamins B1, B3 and B6; potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, and contains dietary antioxidants. Sounds like an ideal wonder food, but to get all of these essentials you need look no further than the humble spud!

Traditional potato cultivation needs a big garden and lots of digging but what if you have a small garden or even a patio?

What You Will Need

1. A container, such as a 5-gallon nursery pot or a burlap bag.
2. Some good garden soil, multi-purpose compost such as sea soil, and some sand.
3. Between one and three seed potatoes.

The Container

Any size of container can be used, as long as it's at least 30 cm wide and deep. It can be made of rigid plastic (such as dustbins), wood—almost anything. The only requirement is that it must have good drainage holes in the bottom.

The Seed Potatoes

You will need one to three seed potatoes. For a 30 cm container, use one seed potato. For larger containers use two or three seed potatoes. Don't use more than three.

Planting the Seed Potatoes

Fill the bottom of the container with about 10 cm of garden soil. Mix in about 2 to 3 large handfuls each of sea soil and sand, breaking up any lumps as you add it to the container. This will allow the potatoes to grow more easily. Place the seed potatoes on top of the soil with the side that has the most eyes uppermost. With the seed potatoes in place, add another 10 cm of soil mix (garden soil, sea soil and sand mixed as suggested above).

Water the container well and mark it with the cultivar you are growing. Place the container in a well-ventilated and sunny position. After a few weeks shoots will begin to appear. When they are about 15 cm above the soil level, add about 10 cm more of the soil mix (as above) so that only 5 cm of the shoot is above soil level. You will have to repeat this again about 3 weeks later.

Care of Potatoes While Growing

The main care required is watering and feeding. Check for dryness by uncovering 10 cm or so of soil and water if it is drying out. The weight of the container will also indicate if the soil is dry. Feed every couple of weeks with a concentrated tomato food, diluted as per the instructions on the packet. If the plants start to produce flowers, pinch them off to encourage the plant to produce larger potatoes.

Visit your favourite [GARDENWORKS](#) for a great selection of seed potatoes that are sure to give you a great feast in the autumn. Why not live a little and try the blue potato cultivars? They have a wonderful nutty flavour and stay blue when cooked!



Variegated Cat Grass
photo courtesy of Skagit Gardens

The Purrfect Variegated Plant

By Scott Pearce

Introduced in the spring of 2009, we're excited to finally get our paws on this gorgeous cat treat – variegated cat grass.

The grass blades are a showy blend of white and green, and are filled with healthy fibre and vitamins – a great natural food supplement for your cat, and a wonderful ornamental to grow in containers alongside other annuals!

Cat grass is actually just another name for barley, and this variegated variety shares all the same characteristics – some health food enthusiasts use barley grass juice in the same way wheatgrass juice is enjoyed– so perhaps your cat will have some human competition when trying to harvest this purrfect plant!

Hands-On Workshops for Adults

AT OUR LOUGHEED LOCATION

Registration deadline is one week prior to class date. There is a \$10 non-refundable registration fee. Registration is free for Ardent Gardener members. Class prices vary as you pay only for the supplies you use. You will receive a 10% discount on purchases made on your class day. To register, please call (604) 299-0621 or e-mail croberts@gardenworks.ca.

Containing Bliss

Thursday, March 31, at 6:30 p.m.

Moss Baskets

Thursday, April 21, at 6:30 p.m.

Herb Pots

Thursday, May 4, at 6:30 p.m.

Moss and Hanging Baskets

Saturday, May 7, at 1:00 p.m.

Moss and Hanging Baskets

Wednesday, May 11, at 6:30 p.m.

Oh Grow Up!

Thursday, May 12, at 6:30 p.m.

Edible and Ornamental

Thursday, May 19, at 6:30 p.m.

AT OUR MANDEVILLE LOCATION

FLORAL – HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS

Registration fee: \$10 plus cost of materials. Pre-registration required no later than 1 week before class. (subject to cancellation). Cost of materials varies depending on flower selection.

Easter Surprise Arrangement

Saturday, April 16, at 1 p.m.

Free Garden Clinics for Adults

AT OUR CAPILANO LOCATION

Raising Orchard (Mason) Bees

Saturday, March 12, at 1 p.m.

Growing Great Vegetables

Saturday, March 19, at 1 p.m.

Growing Great Vegetables

Saturday, March 26, at 1 p.m.

Small Space Vegetable Gardening

Saturday, April 2, at 1 p.m.

Fruit Trees and More

Sunday, April 3, at 1 p.m.

Winter Vegetable Gardening

Saturday, April 23, at 1 p.m.

Growing Luscious Tomatoes

Saturday, May 7, at 1 p.m.

Growing Luscious Tomatoes

Saturday, May 14, at 1 p.m.

AT OUR MANDEVILLE LOCATION

Lawn Care & Chafer Beetle Repair

Saturday, April 2, at 1 p.m.

Vegetable Gardening 101

Free Seminar Series at Mandeville

This new series consists of 3 sessions on the following Thursdays. They cover everything from designing your veggie bed and soil preparation to choosing the plants. We will be discussing the use of mainly organic and natural methods. Pre-registration is required and space is limited.

**March 24, April 28 & June 30
from 6:30 to 8 p.m.**

“Grow Your Own” Free Seminars

STOREWIDE

Held at all seven locations on the following Sundays starting at 1 p.m.

Starting Seeds March 13

Strawberries for Endless Summer Picking March 27

Tossed Salad - Growing Salad Greens April 3

One Potato Two Potato... April 10

(Not)Too Pretty to Eat - Edible Flower Gardens April 17

Tomato Tips and Tricks for Success May 1

Pumpkin Patch Planning May 15

Storytime: Jack and the Bean Stalk May 22

STOREWIDE

Held at all seven locations on the following Sunday starting at 1 p.m.

Making Moss Baskets April 24

AT OUR LOUGHEED LOCATION

Spring Cleaning

Saturday, March 12, at 12 noon

Fragrance in the Garden

Saturday, March 26, at 12 noon

Drip Irrigation

Saturday, April 2, at 12 noon

Landscaping That Sells

Saturday, April 2, at 1:00

Vegetable Gardens

Thursday, April 7, at 6:30 p.m.

Rose Partners

Saturday, April 9, at 12 noon

Wall Shrubs and Climbers

Saturday, April 10, at 1:00

Incredible Edibles

Thursday, April 14, at 6:30 p.m.

Gardening for the Birds

Saturday, April 16, at 12 noon

Planting for Pollen and Nectar

Saturday, April 16, at 1 p.m.

Berry Wonderful Gardens

Saturday, April 30, at 12 noon

Paint Your Garden

Thursday, May 5, at 6:30 p.m.

Moss and Other Hanging Baskets

Saturday, May 7, at 12 noon

Container Arrangements and Arranging Containers

Saturday, May 14, at 12 noon

Living Walls

Saturday, May 14, at 1 p.m.

Tea with Victor

Free Clinics for Seniors

AT OUR LOUGHEED LOCATION

A delightful way to spend your Wednesday mornings! Join Victor from 9:30 to 11 a.m. for informative seminars. Enjoy a cup of tea as he discusses a variety of topics and demonstrates techniques that you can recreate at home at your leisure. Pre-registration is required as space is limited. 604-299-0621

Fruits We Love March 16

Into Bed with Colour March 30

GARDENWORKS

Garden Buds Workshops for Kids

AT OUR LOUGHEED LOCATION

Registration deadline is one week prior to class date. Space is limited. Parent participation is required. To register, call (604) 299-0621 or e-mail croberts@gardenworks.ca.

St. Patrick's Day Pot

Thursday, March 17, at 6:30 p.m. \$7

Hummingbirds

Friday, March 18, at 11 a.m. \$10

Jack and the Beanstalk

Monday, March 21, at 11:00 a.m. \$3

Good Bugs/Bad Bugs

Tuesday, March 22, at 11:00 a.m. \$6

Bees; Mason, Honey and Bumble

Wednesday, March 23, at 11:00 a.m. \$6

Little Red Hen

Thursday, March 24, at 11:00 a.m. \$3

Stone Soup

Friday, March 25, at 11:00 a.m. \$8

Moon and Stars

Friday, April 8, at 6:30 p.m. \$3

Spring Pots

Friday, April 15, at 6:30 p.m. \$10

Easter Basket

Friday, April 22, at 6:30 p.m. \$12

Flowers and Pearls for Mom

Friday, May 6, at 6:30 p.m. \$20

Ciao Bella

Friday, May 20, at 6:30 p.m. \$10

AT OUR SAANICH LOCATION

Suitable for children ages 4 and up. Workshops are held on the following Sundays at 1 p.m. For more information or to register your child, please call 250-721-2140 or e-mail arice@gardenworks.ca.

Earth Worm Castles March 20

Cress Egg Heads April 3

Potato Stamps April 17

**For more details on any
of our clinics, workshops,
or seminars
click here,
or phone the specific
location.**



Each summer a group of us visit one Fraser Valley nursery that borders a blueberry farm, and we always gravitate to the east end of the nursery for a mid afternoon snack. I'm sure the blueberry farmer is aware that the bushes that border the nursery are just as productive as the rest of his field – but those bushes NEVER seem to have fruit on them.

It is such a treat to pick fresh berries, warmed by the sun and bursting with flavour. The good news is that blueberry bushes are easy to grow at home, so that anyone with a bit of space can enjoy truly fresh berries without a special trip to a wholesale shrub grower in the Fraser Valley!

Things to know about blueberries:

- They are good for you – a great source of antioxidants, condensed tannins, soluble fibre and anthocyanin; as previously noted, they are good for you!
- Mature plants yield 3 ½ to 7kg of fruit – enough for 10 or more blueberry pies or a truckload of blueberry muffins! Young plants can produce about 1kg of fruit 2-3 years after planting. One rule of thumb is to grow 2 plants for each household member.
- To maximize fruit production, plant more than one blueberry variety. They seem to like the company, although there is some talk about improved pollination.... The bloom time of the varieties should overlap – we can help with making the right choice from many different varieties.
- Blueberry plants grow well in containers. Try mixing 3 varieties in one large container. Plant the edge with sweetly scented violas, which look great and are a popular flower for spring salads!
- Blueberry plants are wonderful ornamentals, with handsome foliage, a tidy habit and pretty flowers. They shed their leaves each fall in a spectacular display of red and orange fireworks, after which their exposed branches glow bright red all winter!
- Blueberries prefer a moist, acidic soil. Good news – we have naturally acidic soil here in coastal BC! Hooray - they ARE easy to grow!



Blueberry smoothie - the perfect summer drink.

Now for the birds and the bees:

- Birds love blueberries too, so expect a (hopefully) good-natured competition for your prized blueberry crop! (We do have suggestions for protecting both the berries and the birds.)
- Bees are the main pollinator for blueberries, so get excited when you see bees buzzing around your plants in the spring!



'Pink Lemonade' Blueberry photo courtesy of Briggs

And Finally: PINK blueberries?

Just to confuse things the USDA discovered a pink-berried "blueberry", named 'Pink Lemonade' which has been introduced by a Washington state grower, Briggs Plant Propagators. The folks at Briggs tell us that 'Pink Lemonade' bears "a moderate crop of mild, pleasant flavored berries". What a great addition to your blueberry garden! An instant hit mixed with traditional blueberries in a summer fruit salad! 'Pink Lemonade' has its own webpage www.pinklemonade-blueberry.com and its own Facebook page too!

Groceries at Your Doorstep

By Audrie Vander Werf, CLD.

These days, both experienced and novice gardeners alike are keenly aware of the practical benefits of growing edible plants.

What a tiny "footprint" we'd leave if we just stepped outside our door for lettuce and tomatoes, instead of driving to the store; if we relied on our backyards instead of on commercial agriculture; if we used our own fertile soil to grow not just beautiful ornamentals but food for the table.

You can do all that very simply, and have a decorative garden too. For example, when designing your shrub border, remember that alongside your favourite species of flowering and evergreen shrubs, a large rosemary plant, a gooseberry and a few blueberries would be happy to give back to you. Amid your interweaving perennials, purple sage and chives serve all your senses. Trying to decorate a concrete wall? Espaliered apple trees are the perfect foil. Blocking the view of a neighbour's deck is just a fruit tree purchase away.



It's important to group edibles and non-edibles with similar light, soil and water requirements together, as you would when planning a strictly "ornamental" garden. The benefits to your family are certainly worth any extra planning! Other ways of including edibles: in planters on your balcony, or in a raised "square foot" garden, where, seedlings are set closely grouped to provide maximum yield in a small space (irrigated from your rain barrel, naturally). Designers have a major role to play in working with the environment in a responsible way, and **GARDENWORKS** takes that to heart.

Through our "House Call" coaching service, we identify pertinent factors about your site and explore its potential. With our "Complete Landscape Designs" we further develop the opportunities for the site: energy and hydrology conservation, enhancement of your contact with the earth and each other, re-use of existing vegetation and materials, and siting of new plantings, which, happily, often includes edibles!

Click here to view our low rates. Nature is a perfect system within itself. Let's protect and adorn it with care. For information or to book a landscape design consultation please call us.
604-629-1419 (mainland)
or 250-721-2140 (island).



GARDENWORKS Seven great garden centres serving you in B.C.

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North Vancouver V7R 2S3
(604)980-6340

**NORTH VANCOUVER
CAPILANO**
705 West 3rd Street
North Vancouver V7M 3E3
(604)988-8082

MANDEVILLE
4746 Marine Drive
Burnaby V5J 3G6
(604)434-4111

SAANICH
4290 Blenkinsop Road
Victoria V8X 2C4
(250)721-2140

OAK BAY
1916 Oak Bay Avenue
Victoria V8R 1C7
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COLWOOD
1859 Island Highway
Colwood V8B 1J3
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