



January - February - March 2019

Vol. 14, No. 1

447 Winthrop Road, Deep River, Ct. 06417
(860) 526-9056 www.acergardens.com
email – acer@acergardens.com

“Anyone who thinks that gardening begins in the spring and ends in the fall is missing the best part of the whole year ... for gardening begins in January with the dream.” Josephine Neuse

Anyone who gardens knows the difference between dream and reality ... but good, careful planning can easily include a little of both! What better time than a long, unsettled, unpredictable New England winter to engage in that very thing? Take advantage of this quiet time to think and plan for your garden’s future.

Take the time to really look through all the garden catalogs that pour in! What a perfect time to consider changes to your own garden: new additions to flower beds, new colors and new foliage choices. Plan your garden’s over-all look for this coming season including container placement, cutting gardens, hanging baskets, perennial beds and ground covers. Location is everything! You may want to screen unsightly views with evergreens or flowering shrubs. You might want a new focal point, or a hidden garden to stroll to. If you have a view, do you take advantage of it? Make sure your terrace or deck includes some fragrant plant material. Repeating plants, shapes and colors adds coherence to plantings and actually simplifies the design process. You may have some un-used space (that no-longer-needed swing set for example) which could make a new seating area or display a stand of flowering bushes). You might want to connect parts of your garden to each other by re-arranging some landscaping. The trick lies in re-assessing your basic plan to make sure it meets and adapts to your current wishes ... that’s where the dreaming part comes in!

You may actually find that your garden is exactly right for your way of life. Certain plants and colors become “hot” in gardening circles but that doesn’t mean they’re right for you and that you should change your garden just to accommodate them. Be selective. If you’re attracted to a plant but it doesn’t really “fit” perhaps it would work as a container plant. Have you always wanted to grow something really “different”? Tuck it in somewhere and see how it does. Your garden is a reflection of your style, not someone else’s. It’s meant for your enjoyment.

Acer Gardens is really excited about our new perennial, annual and shrub offerings for spring 2019. Weather permitting, we hope to open the last week in March (please call 860-526-9056 for the actual date as we get into March) and look forward to working with you throughout the season. Plan to come in, look at all the new plants, and talk over your garden plans for the coming garden year! Our current Information Sheets are available on our web site.

Bird Feeding

February is National Bird Feeding Month. Our over-wintering local birds are primarily seed eaters and feeders should be sited in the sun with wind protection available and shrubbery nearby for warmth and protection in the night. Many bird seed mixtures are available but safflower seeds are particularly popular because most squirrels don't like them. Hanging oranges from low tree limbs will attract some birds such as Baltimore orioles, woodpeckers and finches. Many birds also enjoy eating slices of apple or pear... some are said to be fond of peanuts, nuts, pumpkin seeds, popcorn and Cheerios! Consider planting some "magnet" shrubs (in the spring) specifically to attract birds to your garden. Enkianthus, Myrica (Bayberry) and Ilex (Winterberry) will all attract birds and give you the bonus of brilliant fall color. Don't be disturbed if doves arrive ... they are a great dropped-seed clean-up crew!

The National Wildlife Federation (www.nwf.org) has a series of articles available on its web site on how to create a wildlife habitat in your garden. Providing food, shelter and water for wildlife, as well as a protected place to raise their young, can help you qualify to become an official Certified Wildlife Habitat.

Gardens and Flower Shows

With the excitement of the holidays over, many gardeners look out at winter and long to see gardens and things in bloom. Fortunately, your computer can take you visiting all over the country! Go to www.Ilovegardens.com and see the listings for every state. Some famous viewable gardens include Connecticut's New Canaan Nature Center (www.newcanaannature.org), Massachusetts's Arnold Arboretum at (www.Harvard.edu), Rhode Island's Blithewold Garden (www.Blithewold.org), Pennsylvania's Longwood Gardens (www.longwoodgardens.org), New York's Botanical Garden (www.nybg.org), Wave Hill (www.Wavehill.org), the Brooklyn Botanic garden (www.bbg.org) and England's Royal Horticultural Society's 2019 Flower Show (www.rhs.org.uk).

Visiting famous gardens by computer is an easy way to get new ideas and to see how other gardeners have organized their specialties. Even if you can't grow everything the gardens feature because of climate restrictions you are bound to get a fresh perspective. Tropicals can be grown in containers or as houseplants; landscapes can be miniaturized and adapted to smaller areas. Consider computer visits to:

The Huntington Botanical Gardens (www.huntington.org)

207 acres feature more than a dozen garden areas including camellias, lily ponds, subtropicals, herbs, roses, palms and even a children's garden. Many of the plants are exotic ornamentals.

Located in Southern California, the parking lot actually features survivors of California's first commercial avocado grove!

Winterthur Museum (www.winterthur.org)

Henry du Pont's Winterthur is the leading museum of American decorative arts and its 60-acre naturalistic garden is outstanding. The web site will take you on a tour of the gardens featuring summer and fall color and the Enchanted Woods, a fairy landscape designed for children. The yearly bloom calendar is a well-designed and useful reference paper.

Look ahead and think about planning a day trip to the CT Flower Show in Hartford. The 38th annual CT Garden Show will take place in 2019 from Thursday, February 21 through Sunday, February 24 from 10 a.m. on. This year's theme is "The Charm of Spring." There will be over 300 booths, 20 landscaped gardens and more than 80 hours of seminars and demonstrations led by horticulturists and garden experts (all free with your ticket.) Go to www.ctflowershow.com for further information, hours and ticket availability.

What a great way to get ready for spring!

Best of all! Acer Gardens will be back at the CT Flower Show in Corner Booth # 731 and #733. Come visit us and explore our seasonal offerings of succulents, perennials, annuals, mini shrubs, pre-potted herbs (thyme, sage, parsley, rosemary, chives and spearmint) and garden gifts. We will also be raffling off 5 \$50.00 gift cards. Stop in and see us! You might take the opportunity to bring a ½ cup of soil to the UConn Co-op both for free soil testing!

The 2019 Philadelphia International Flower Show will be held March 2 – March 10 at the Convention Center. This year's theme is "Flower Power, inspired by the 1960's and 70's. Exhibits will focus on how flowers convey emotions that transcend language, culture and borders. The Flower Show is also hosting the FTD World Cup 2019, the most prestigious flower design competition in the world. It has not been held in the United States since 1985 and will showcase the work of award-winning designers from more than 20 countries. Each designer will feature four designs apiece and all will be incorporated into the entrance garden. Bring your hand-held camera! The web site (www.theflowershow.com) will feature videos of the exhibits and interviews with recognized gardening experts.

Workshops

Acer Gardens' Winter Arrangement workshops were an outstanding success, capturing the holiday spirit and ensuring a re-run in 2019. Enthusiastic participants created beautiful arrangements as they sipped cider and cookies, made new friends and built holiday memories.

In response to your many requests, the nursery will be expanding its workshop offerings in 2019. Watch the web site and your email for further announcements. Bill Harris will kick off the season with an early Spring Walk and Prune Workshop. Late Winter pruning pushes new growth; late spring pruning slows new growth. Do you know how to decide which is the right choice for a particular tree and why and when? How does current weather affect your planning/timing? Please plan to join us for this new event.

The Really-Must-Do-Now List

This is the time of year many gardeners don't really have an urgent list! Now is the time for dreaming and planning and hoping ... for thinking about all the things your garden could be in the future. Just be a little realistic! There are only so many hours in the day and the CT gardening season is only so long.

Winter shows you the bones of your garden and suggests what new plant material would help you enjoy your garden more. Evergreens are always a restful addition to the landscape and offer a permanent background to many flower beds. A simple box hedge can bring a sense of calm and order to the landscape. Looking through your photos can help you decide which areas of your garden need improving or re-arranging. Garden books are a great source of inspiration. Seeing how other people have solved problems can often help us find solutions to our own garden dilemmas and help us to recognize problem areas.

Plan your garden's over-all look for this coming season including container placement, cutting gardens, hanging baskets, perennial beds and ground covers. Location is everything! You may want to screen unsightly views with evergreens or flowering shrubs. Make sure your terrace or deck includes some fragrant plant material and that your color scheme echoes the interior of your house. You can also elevate the look of your garden by raising containers off the ground, using shrubs and vines to add height, and utilizing structures such as pergolas and tuteurs. Consider setting up a chart to monitor the sequence of bloom from your bushes and flowering trees and to make note of what you see from the house. Many garden designers like to ensure that the inside and outside colors used compliment each other and that you always have something attractive to look at from the house. Even in winter, the shape of evergreens can echo the flow of your garden.

Seasonal Reminders

In the middle of February, re-apply Wilt-Stop to your evergreens and rhododendrons. Try to spray during a dry period when the temperature is above 32 degrees.

If you are using deer repellents remember that deer quickly get used to certain scents and are lazy about changing established routes so it's a good idea to change repellents often. Re-apply repellents after heavy rain or snow.

Clean, oil and sharpen all your garden tools and shovels now. You'll be too busy in the spring! Some gardeners paint a splash of red on handles so that they can find their tools easily if they are dropped in the grass or at the edge of a bed. Treat yourself to a new pair of gardening gloves.

Keeping Winter Blooms Going

As you enjoy the bulbs you have forced, remember that paper whites will not bloom again and should be discarded.

When the amaryllis bloom is finished, cut off the stem but keep caring for the plant. Give it a bright, sunny location in the house and fertilize regularly. In summer, when all danger of frost has passed, put the amaryllis out in a protected part of the garden where it will receive about 5 hours of sunlight and some afternoon shade. Fertilize lightly until August and leave the plant alone until Labor Day. Then, cut off the leaves, and place the pot in a dark cellar, withholding all water, and store in the dark for 2-3 months. They need to rest about 8-12 weeks and are happy being pot bound. Gradually bring them upstairs, water, and place in the light. Before you know it you will see new leaves and a developing bud.

Poinsettias prefer a day temperature of 67 degrees, like a humid environment and don't mind an occasional misting. The bright, indirect light of an east window suits them but avoid drafts. Put the plants outside for the summer, trim back and repot in late summer and, well before frost, bring them into the house as the daylight begins to shorten.

Caring for House Plants

The benefits of growing house plants in your home have been talked about for years. Scientists have recently shown that these benefits extend far beyond helping you "feel good" about winter! Some plants (orchids and succulents) actually release oxygen at night and refresh the air in a room. Plants release 97% of the water they take in, increasing the humidity of the air around them and helping to decrease the incidence of dry skin. Some plants actually help your general health by removing toxins from the air.

Many herbs make wonderful houseplants and will thrive indoors. Although it is a Mediterranean plant, rosemary needs to be misted regularly or it will not do well in the house. Sage, thyme, bay leaves and parsley will all flourish ... the more you cut them to use in your cooking, the happier the plants will be. Give them as much sun and light as you can and don't over water.

Succulents are easy-to-please and survive dry indoor conditions with relative ease. The fleshy leaves and thick stems allow the plants to hoard water but it is the strong, distinctive leaf shapes that attract the gardener's eye. Give them the brightest light possible (south facing is ideal) and add sand to the potting soil for good drainage. Let the soil dry out almost completely and then ... water sparingly!

Remember to turn your houseplants regularly to keep them from growing or leaning towards the light. Do not water your plants on a strict schedule but only as the plant needs it. Fertilize lightly once a month.

Growing Ferns Indoors

Growing ferns sounds difficult ... but as long as you meet a few basic requirements it's actually no harder than keeping orchids growing. Many of the ferns which grow happily in your garden make attractive house plants. Ferns have been growing and thriving for 300 million years. They are low-maintenance house-plants but they do have some definite requirements: light and moisture.

Humidity is essential for ferns. Misting your ferns is essential for success (some people pop them in a shower!) Standing the fern pot on a tray of pebbles and keeping those wet is a definite plus! Most ferns live happily in the understory of forests and rain-forests so they need to be well-hydrated and prefer an evenly moist soil with regular watering. Don't let the soil dry out. Bathrooms and kitchens are ideal fern homes.

Ferns are not deep shade plants. They need bright, filtered light to grow well so a room with north or east windows is generally ideal. Keep them out of strong sunlight. During the growing season, feed your ferns occasionally with weak fertilizer but let them rest in the winter. Most fern house-plants will happily summer outdoors.

Try these:

Boston Fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata*)

One of the most effective plants for removing air pollutants, Boston Ferns need room for their beautiful fronds to hang down and must never be allowed to dry out. Mist them daily for the best performance.

Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*)

Easy to grow, this fern will tolerate more light than many others as long as the soil is kept moist. The upright fronds group well with other plants.

Bird's Nest Fern (*Asplenium nidus*)

This fern responds to light conditions: more light makes the leaves crinkle, less light makes the leaves flat. It does not require as much humidity as other ferns but doesn't like to be brushed against.

Dallas Fern (a miniature Boston Fern)

Increasingly popular, this fern takes up less room than its parent and is a little less fussy about moisture and light. It's considered the ideal "starter fern".

Outstanding New Nursery Selections for 2019

Acer Gardens is excited about the many, unusual new plant introductions available for the 2019 growing season. Unsure about where a new plant might fit into your existing garden? Put it in a container and move it around the garden at will. You will be able to see easily where the new plant would fit with what you already grow and where it will show to the garden's best advantage.

Perennials

Part of the fun of growing perennials is tucking-in new versions of old favorites or adding a little spice with new colors. Think about adding some of these (all hardy in zones 3-9):

Solidago shortii 'Solar Cascade'	18-30"	Short's Goldenrod is on the Endangered Species List. Blooms September through October in full sun to part shade. Attracts butterflies.
Solidago sphacelata 'Golden Fleece'	12-18"	Drought-tolerant in full sun. Blooms August and September. Naturalizes well. Attracts bees and butterflies.
Linaria purpurea	18-24"	Native pollinator features long-blooming, violet flowers from June to August. Tolerates deer and drought.
Iris pumila	8-12"	Dwarf bearded iris blooms early to mid spring. Effective in rock gardens or planted in drifts. Cultivars include 'Cherry Garden' (Red), 'Blue Denim' (ruffled sky blue flowers) and 'Brassie' (golden yellow).
Hosta 'Kingsize'	36-40"	Broad-ribbed, shiny, deep green foliage takes this giant to new heights! Flowers may reach 4'. Outstanding specimen plant.
Heuchera 'Fire Alarm'	9"	Hot red foliage with pink flowers. Blooms all summer in full shade or sun. Superb edging plant. Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.
Coreopsis 'Lil' Bang Darling Clementine'	12"	Gold-orange petals shine in full sun. Forms clumps. Salt tolerant and deer resistant.

Annuals

Annuals continue to provide a wide range of choice. This year, new color combinations are dazzling and sure to catch your eye. Whether used to brighten containers or flower beds, there are annual choices for everyone. This summer, think about adding:

Artemisia 'Makana Silver'	24-36"	Mounding, soft, silvery foliage makes a statement in a container or in the ground. Fast-growing; needs good drainage. Deer-resistant.
Coleus 'Main St. Sunset Boulevard'	16"	Pointed leaves are chocolate to bronze with hot Coral centers! Compact and well-branched. Grow in part sun.
Coleus 'Main St. Ocean Drive'	12-16"	Rose centers with a wide burgundy surround and narrow light green margin. Plant in combinations or as a specimen plant.
Craspedia 'Drumstick'	20-24"	Brilliant golden-yellow ball-like blooms top long stems. Cut flowers have long vase-life. Excellent container plants.

Ipomoea batatas 'South of the Border'	5-8"	Unique lime and wine leaf color creates great accent. Semi-trailing habit is unique.
Mandevilla 'Sun Parasol Giant Marbled Crimson'		Upright and vigorous with large crimson flowers. Flowers slightly later.

Seeds

Linaria purpurea	18-36"	Grow in well-drained soil in full sun. Violet blooms June through August. Tolerates dry conditions.
Single Blend Trailing Nasturtium		Vibrant-colored trailing mix blooms until frost. Suitable for hanging baskets or to drape over a rock wall. Perfect ground cover.
Beets 'Gourmet Blend'		Includes 'Detroit Dark Red' with deep red roots, 'Chioggia' with interior rings of bright pink and White, and 'Golden' with bright yellow flesh. An outstanding mix!
Snap Pea 'Sugar Magnolia'		High, fast germination rate produces a bright green vine with purple pods! Good heat resistance. Pick daily for maximum crop.

Often-Asked Questions

My African Violets are limping along but they're so pretty in bloom. How should I care for them?

African Violets like a rich soil (special mixes are sold) and bright light but not sunlight...an east window is the perfect exposure for them. Don't fertilize too often (again, special mixtures are available.) Use lukewarm water when watering and water only from the bottom. They propagate easily from leaf cuttings, which are usually taken in the spring. (Put plastic wrap over a jar filled with water and secure with a rubber band. Poke a hole in the middle of the plastic wrap and insert a stem cutting. Roots will develop in a short time and the leaf can then be planted.)

I'm already sick of this winter gray! How can I plan ahead and get some color in the winter garden?

You can add color to a winter landscape by using plants, trees and bushes noted for their berries or bark. Berries are the prominent feature in Hollies, Witch Hazel, Winterberry and Chokeberry. Shrubs like Red Dogwood will give flaming color throughout winter. Paperbark Maple and River Birch give exfoliating bark in colors ranging from cinnamon to orange. Some Japanese Maples ('Coral Bark') intensify their color in cold weather. Miscanthus grasses give interesting foliage and seed heads all winter long and provide birds with a safe refuge. Japanese Andromeda gives year-long interest. Think about planting evergreens (available not just in green but also in blue and yellow tints) where you can see them from the house. As a bonus, fill a winter-safe outside container with evergreen cuttings or a small evergreen (plant it in the garden when spring comes) and position it near the outside door you use the most.

I'd like to hurry Spring along and force some flowering branches! What's the best way to do this?

Branches of Forsythia, Witch Hazel and Pussy Willow can be cut and forced in February. Crab Apple and flowering Cherry, cut in March, will usually bloom in 3 weeks. It's a good idea to take a few successive cuttings several weeks apart... and you'll have longer bloom too!

Count back 6 weeks from the time a flowering shrub should be in bloom in order to establish the earliest time you can force a plant. Cut the branches and bring them into a cool spot and plunge the stems into warm water. (Many people put the bottoms of the stems on a cutting board and smash the cut end with a hammer first.) After a few days, move the vase to regular house temperatures and keep it filled with water. Change the water as often as needed.

I'd love to try some fancy vegetable seeds when the weather turns warm! Any secrets?

Seed-starting has a few pitfalls waiting for beginners and experienced gardeners alike and there a few mistakes you will want to avoid. Always check the directions on the envelope carefully. Sowing seeds too early, either indoors or outside, can lead to leggy, weak plants.

Once they have germinated, seedlings want 12-14 hours of light daily. Take care not to place the grow lights so close to the plants that the plants could burn as they grow.

I wasn't able to plant a lot of bulbs this past fall? Anyway to rectify that this spring?

Many gardeners missed out planting lots of bulbs due to the wet weather this past fall. Acer Gardens will have pre-potted, ready-to-bloom bulbs available this spring. Muscari, daffodils, alliums, hyacinths and tulips will all be ready for you to take home and enjoy. You can pop them into containers or sink the pots into the ground.

Getting Ready for Spring

In late March (or whenever the snow melts):

Clean-up and rake the garden beds. Dead leaves blow around all winter and lodge in bushes and plants. You need to remove these before mice and voles decide to move in! Take this opportunity to cut down and clear off dead Daylily and Hosta foliage and tidy up anything you overlooked in the fall. As tempting as it is to get out in the garden and get going, let the weather be your guide. Our last three springs have been cold and wet and some damage can be done by removing protective coverings too quickly.

Remove winter mulch from flower beds slowly. Bulbs coming up now will not be bothered by a late frost.

Cut down any perennials you left standing in the fall. (Cut back Gaura, Lavender, Perovskia and Montauk Daisies later in the season when you start to see bud-break.) Watch for frost-heaved plants and push them gently but firmly back into the ground.

As perennials begin to emerge, assess their location. Sun and shade patterns change over time and it may be necessary to move some plants to a better spot. Remove any winter-damaged foliage from your perennials in early Spring and check to be sure that some plants (like Brunnera) have not formed a mat that some bulbs cannot break through.

As the soil becomes friable, keep dividing, planting and transplanting. Here in CT, we can divide or move perennials until the middle of May (Rudbeckia, Black-Eyed Susan and Leucanthemum seem to need division to thrive.) Peonies and Iris should be divided only in the fall.

When you acquire a new plant, get it into the ground as quickly as possible and remember to determine the plant's "best side." Positioning is everything! Experienced gardeners realize that allowing a plant to show its own "natural" shape will give you the best look and the best results.

Weed! It's amazing, but weeds can and do grow in and survive Connecticut winters all the time.

The Spring Garden Chores Information Sheet is available on the web site (www.AcerGardens.com).

Photograph your bulbs as they begin to bloom and keep them as a permanent record. The photos will be helpful next fall as you plan where to plant new bulbs. (Don't forget to deadhead the daffodils but let the stems and leaves turn brown before you cut them down completely.) Photographing your garden as the season progresses is the best record of all your hard work.

Late April/early May is the ideal time to apply lime, if needed, to the lawn; fertilize and use pre-emergent weed control.

Available spring products at the nursery will include pelletized lime, pre-emergent fertilizer, lawn and garden fertilizer, Milorganite, organic lawn and garden products, grass seed, straw and control products for deer, insects, rabbits, voles, weeds, bugs and diseases.

Acer Gardens' own Alpine Mix is available for trough and rock gardens. The nursery's specially developed Supergrow Fertilizer is available in two formulas: 18-6-18 is designed for steady feeding throughout the season and is used at the nursery. 17-5-10 is pelleted for slow release and designed for container use. Custom blended and screened topsoil is also available along with bagged cedar mulch.

The **Spring Garden Chores** Information Sheet is available on the web site (www.AcerGardens.com.)

Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Garden

Pollinators have been called "nature's crop dusters" ... without them we would be missing many of our favorite flowers and wildflowers. There are a number of ways to attract pollinators and keep them working for you but they are happiest in natural settings that resemble the floral landscapes which attract them in the first place. We tend to think of pollinators as being only bees but butterflies, moths and birds are all contributing to the job.

The Bumblebee population is declining. Many gardeners are going out of their way to attract Mason bees because they are incredible cross-pollinators, gathering pollen and nectar on the same visit. (Do not confuse them with Carpenter bees ... Mason bees are a different species and are gentle and friendly.) Arriving early in the season, they are invaluable for pollinating fruit trees. They are not interested in eating your house! Very sociable (they never come alone), Mason bees are happiest living in special houses, readily available at garden supply stores/catalogs.

A few simple additions to your gardening could increase the number of pollinator visitors:

Garden in the sun. Even late into the fall, you will find bees hanging onto flowers and sunning themselves.

Cultivate native plants. Natives are four times more attractive to native bees than anything else.

Plant in clumps. Clusters of one pollinator-friendly plant will draw more visitors.

Aim for extended bloom. Have at least 3 types of flowers blooming in each season.

Select flowers in bright colors. Vary the shapes of the flowers to accommodate different pollinators.

Choose common plants and heirloom varieties which are proven sources of nectar and pollen.

Provide ground cover and shade as well as shallow dishes of water.

Help your vegetable garden attract pollinators by planting flowering herbs.

Do not use pesticides.

Honeybees: Attracted to sweet/minty scents, plants on which they can perch and blooms fully open in the daytime. They prefer flat, shallow blossoms and actually retain a memory of plants they have visited! Try Iris, Mountain Laurel, Violets, Cosmos, Hollyhock, Phlox, Nepeta, Salvia, Lavender and Roses.

Bumblebees: Long-tongued and heavier than Honeybees, Bumblebees are sun worshippers. Twice as fast as Honeybees, Bumblebees carry a great deal of pollen per trip because they are so much larger and are not making much honey. Consider using: Columbine, Snapdragons, Monarda, Monkshood, Candytuft, Agastache, and Buddleia.

Butterflies: Although oddly enough butterflies taste with their feet and don't get much pollen on their bodies, they are still highly efficient pollinators. They like brightly colored red, orange, purple and yellow highly-scented flowers which grow in clusters and are fully open during the day. Growing Asters, Sedum, Sweet William, Marigolds, Coneflowers, Zinnias and Buddleia will be sure to attract them.

Moths: They don't get much attention, but moths are the night-shift pollinators in the garden. Appearing in the late afternoon, moths are attracted to all the nocturnal, heavily-scented flowers. Many of those flowers open in late afternoon and bloom into the night; most of the flowers have long-throats and the pale flowers stay visible for a long time. Attract moths with Nicotiana, Gaura, Stock, Honeysuckle, Moonflower, Evening Primrose and Night-blooming Jasmine.

Birds: Flowers attracting birds need to be shaped to accommodate those whirring wings and their stems must be strong enough for perching. Hummingbirds, key to native wildflower pollination, are attracted most by red flowers but other birds head for the nectar available in many summer flowers. Birds have no real sense of smell but bright, deep colors attract them all summer long. Plant Columbine, Agastache, Salvia, Penstemon, Trumpet creepers and Bee Balm to bring them flying in.

Providing extended seasonal blooms for pollinators just takes a little planning. Bees and butterflies will be attracted to many different flowers over the course of the gardening season and will spend a great deal of time in the garden if you provide a selection of their favorites. For example:

Spring: Aubretia, Hyacinth, Pulmonaria, Crocus, Hyacinth, Lilac, Primrose

Summer: Baptisia, Buddleia, Bee Balm, Cosmos, Echinacea, Honeysuckle, Hosta, Lavender, Nepeta, Valerian

Fall: Asters, Chrysanthemum, Goldenrod, Hyssop, Sedum, Vernonia, Zinnias

The **Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Garden** Information Sheet is available on the web site (www.Acergardens.com). You might also like to take a look at the **Butterfly Magnets** and **Attracting Hummingbirds** Information Sheets.

Native Plants to Make Your Life Easier

Many native plants, or wildflowers, will do well in a cultivated garden as long as their soil, sun and moisture requirements are met. Choosing plants that have long since habituated themselves to your local conditions gives you a head-start. (Mixing sun plants with woodland plants will not help you succeed so plan accordingly!) Natives tend to be quick-growing and long-lived, disease resistant and pest free and easily withstand dramatic climate changes such as drought and blizzard. Once established, they need very little fertilizing and watering. Any tendency to invasiveness can be easily controlled by pulling up self-seedlings.

In the wider conservation picture, natives' growth habits and root structures keep soil in place and store water. The plants are pre-programmed to produce fruit, nectar, seeds and nuts at various times of the year in sync with the local fauna. Making space for native plants in your garden almost guarantees a procession of birds, butterflies, insects and mammals seeking food and shelter. Visually, growing natives connects the boundaries of your garden to the wider natural landscape.

The New England Wildflower Society has some recommendations for natives guaranteed to thrive in this climate. Choose from:

Asclepias incarnata	Common Milkweed	Sun/partial shade
Aruncus dioicus	Goatsbeard	Sun/partial shade
Aster novae-angliae	New England Aster	Sun
Boltonia asteroides	Boltonia	Sun
Cimicifuga racemosa	Black Snakeroot	Sun/partial shade
Echinacea purpurea	Purple Coneflower	Sun
Eupatorium maculatum	Joe-Pye Weed	Sun
Hibiscus moscheutos	Marsh Mallow	Sun
Lobelia cardinalis	Cardinal Flower	Sun/partial shade
Monarda didyma	Bee Balm	Sun/partial shade
Oenothera fruticosa	Sundrops	Sun
Phlox maculata	Wild Sweet William	Sun/partial shade
Tiarella cordifolia	Foamflower	Shade
Tradescantia	Spiderwort	Sun
Vernonia noveboracensis	Tall Ironweed	Sun
Veronicastrum virginicum	Culver's Root	Sun

Planning for Mass and Long Bloom with Perennials

Many gardeners find that a little bit of advance planning will give them a lower maintenance landscape. There are a number of perennials that are easy-to-grow and also offer a long blooming period; some will bloom for several months! Faithful deadheading can often extend bloom even further. As the end of the flowering period is signaled by diminishing bloom, shearing the plant back by ½ will often result in another blooming. Dividing the blooming period into three segments will give you lots of choice:

Dicentra formosa	Bleeding Heart	May – August
Gaura	Wand Flower	May – September
Scabiosa	Pincushion Flower	May – September
Geranium 'Rozanne'	Cranesbill	May – September
Agastache	Anise-Hyssop	July to first frost
Achillea	Yarrow	June – August

Coreopsis	Tickseed	June to first frost
Echinacea	Cone Flower	June – August
Gaillardia	Blanket Flower	June – August
Kalimeris	Japanese Aster	June – September
Nepeta	Catmint	June – September
Perovskia	Russian Sage	July – September
Phlox paniculata	Garden Phlox	July – September
Potentilla	Cinquefoil	June – August
Rudbeckia	Black-eyed Susan	July – September
Sidalcea	Miniature Hollyhock	July – September
Aster	Aster	August – October

Cool-Season Vegetables

Every year, more and more gardeners discover the pleasure of growing some of the vegetables they eat. A successful vegetable garden needs 8 hours of full sun daily and some protection from excessive winds.

Raised beds and containers make good alternatives to full-size gardens although containers will require more watering. Adding organic matter to the soil (compost or manure) will give your vegetables a boost and help drainage. Vegetables can also be tucked into gardens easily. Lettuces are ideal for containers or even the front of garden beds. Tomatoes decorate many a patio or terrace, mixed in with herbs; cucumbers can be grown on a trellis or pergola. New dwarf varieties and bush forms of plants allow space-saving techniques. Adding natural insect repellents to herb and vegetable gardens (basil, nasturtiums and marigolds) will help you grow vegetables successfully. Pre-grown vegetables are best suited for container growing and will give you a head start.

Probably the most important concept for a vegetable gardener to live by is: “Rotate the Crops!” Failure to do this can result in declining harvests and plants that do not thrive and grow to expectation. Plotting your garden on graph paper will help you establish boundaries and maximize your available space. If you are using rows be sure to leave access routes for weeding and fertilizing. Square foot gardens (4’ x 4’) have proven very helpful for smaller vegetable gardens. Divide the area into 16 squares and space plants accordingly. Use stakes or a trellis to send vines upright and save space ... many new cultivars of Cucumber and Zucchini are designed for upright growth. Growing on stakes also frustrates many common predators!

Many vegetables can be planted as soon as you can work the soil. Known as “cool season vegetables”, they are tolerant of root disturbance and benefit from getting a jump on the season. They include Swiss Chard, Spinach, Kale, Leeks, Onions, Cilantro, Peas, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Carrots, Beets, Celery and Radishes. Leaf lettuces, such as Black Seeded Simpson, Arugula, and Mache are harvested young and re-planting every 2 – 3 weeks will keep you harvesting until the heat of the summer.

As a general guide:

Sow or plant in cool weather: Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Lettuce, Onions, Parsley, Parsnips, Peas, Radishes, Spinach, Swiss chard, Turnips.

Sow or plant in warm weather: Beans, Carrots, Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Melons, Peppers, Squashes, Tomatoes.

Sow or Plant to Give 1 crop per season: Corn, Eggplant, Leeks, Melons, Peppers, Potatoes, Squashes, Tomatoes.

Re-sow for additional crops: Beans, Beets, Carrots, Lettuce, Parsnips, Radishes, Spinach, Turnips.

As the season progresses and the temperatures rise, be sure to include a few flowers and herbs to help attract the pollinators so necessary to a successful vegetable garden. Attracting honeybees, bumblebees, butterflies and moths is made easier if you include some plants of Basil, Bee Balm, Black-Eyed Susan, Cosmos, Alyssum, Marigold, Oregano and Zinnia.

Our Information sheet on **Growing Vegetables** is available on the web site (www.acergardens.com) .

Garden Help Lines

As the season kicks off, questions can arise and Uconn's Cooperative Extension System is available to answer questions on many garden topics including plant insects and diseases. They can be reached at 1-877-486-6271 or (www.ladybug.uconn.edu/index.html)

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station will answer inquiries on lawn problems (860-683-4977), soil testing (203-974-8521) and plant disease issues (203-974-8601).

General Reminder

Tuesday at Acer Gardens Are 60+ Discount Days ... 10% off all purchases.

Wednesday offers a 10% Nursery Discount to all customers.

Acer Gardens
Linda Z. Lynch
Editor