

GARDENING GEMS

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Iris versicolor –
Harriston emblem

“To be interested in the changing seasons is a happier state of mind than to be hopelessly in love with spring.”
— George Santayana



Well the flowers must be gearing up to be extra beautiful next month because we sure have had our share of April showers

Not much surprise that the houseplant of the month is the lily. With many shapes and colors now available the one we'll be most looking for in the next couple of weeks is the highly perfumed Easter Lily. When you're buying these lilies, either for yourself or as a gift, look for a large number of unopened buds (but some may show color). Make sure there's lots of soil to support the heavy stems, and inspect to make sure there's no grey mold (botrytis) on the leaves, stems or soil - that's an indicator that the plant has been kept in damp conditions or has had too much water - such plants should be avoided. The cooler the plants position the longer the blooms will last. Give lots of light but not in direct sunlight. The plant will not bloom again in the house, but plant it outside and watch it flower next year.



Want to be prepared for when the hummingbirds are getting close in their summer migration - check for a real-time map of where they are each day. As of the 12th some were as far north as lower Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, so there's still lots of time to watch the map as they come further north into Canada. Now you can be ready and know when to have your feeders washed and back outside to greet these little wonders coming through. <https://www.hummingbirdcentral.com/hummingbird-migration-spring-2019-map.htm>

The Zoo Beneath Our Feet. The gardener has a long, touchy-feely relationship with the soil. As every good cultivator knows, you assess the earth by holding it. Is it dark and crumbly, is there an earthworm or beetle in there, is it moist, and when you smell it, are you getting that pleasant earthy aroma?

All these signs are reassuring, and have been through the ages, but they are mere indicators of something much greater and infinitely mysterious. As one gardening writer put it “The soil is earth's natural internet”.



When one delves into the mysteries of the ground beneath our feet - it's like a whole new universe. While so many are just beginning to hear the words "Mycorrhizal Fungi, protozoa, microbial species etc., hearing and understanding are still far apart. Farmers now do as little soil digging as possible because traditional tillage destroys the fungal networks and the desirable soil structure. Cover crops keep the soil life happy between growing seasons. The organic gardener's mantra - "Feed the soil, not the plant." For a fascinating read and more in depth information to help you understand what you're planting into, see the full article at https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/the-zoo-beneath-our-feet-were-only-beginning-to-understand-soils-hidden-world/2017/08/08/f73e3950-7799-11e7-9eac-d56bd5568db8_story.html?fbclid=IwAR0-aAmpMUyPiih-orUy5QIvVhJKMDEdbd_7ffeKEIf2uBxZBS4VFJ1q6vQ&noredirect=on&utm_term=.9756c4e9211b



Ephemerals - what are they? Spring flowering ephemerals are plants that last only a brief time. They don't die, they just go dormant and disappear from view very shortly after flowering. Ephemerals are triggered to grow with the first hint of warm weather. Once much warmer weather takes hold the tops die back but the roots continue to grow. Their natural habitat is a woody setting. Although there are many, the ones you are most familiar with are the brown spotted leaf Dog Toothed Violet, Pulsatilla, Marsh Marigold, Trilliums, and Bleeding Heart

Not all Corn Gluten Meal is the Same: The natural material is a by-product of the wet-milling process used to produce corn starch and corn syrup. Corn Gluten Meal contains 60% protein and 10% nitrogen by weight and is usually used as livestock feed.

Corn Gluten Meal is not the Corn Meal found in grocery stores (yet many social media sites claim it is). Corn Meal has no herbicidal properties and the only thing it will do is feed the ants and slugs. Corn Gluten Meal is always labelled as a pre-emergent herbicide - it's expensive and that's why people go for the cheaper Corn Gluten Feed or Distillers Grain. But these are not marked as pre-emergent herbicides and therefore will not work.

A lot of the on-line information tells you that Corn Gluten Meal prevents the germination of (weed) seeds, but this is not really the case. The seeds will germinate normally, and once the radicle is formed it starts making roots which absorb water and nutrients from the soil. Corn Gluten Meal inhibits the formation of roots - but the developing roots must take up enough protein from the Corn Gluten Meal to have an effect, plus the soil has to be on the dry side.

Mature plants are not affected because they have many more root hairs and the roots go deeper in the soil so they're never exposed to enough protein to have an effect.

(excerpts from Iowa State University plus Garden Myths blog of Robert Pavlis)



And while we're on the subject of internet spam - just remember not every hint and supposedly good advice is for real. Check it out - remember "if it sounds too good to be true then it probably isn't."

Recently these wonderful tomato plants were advertised - all different colors of fruit on the one plant. Now that *is* possible with successful grafting where one could actually have red, purple, white, yellow, orange, or striped tomatoes all on one plant because all those colors are available (altho' not quite to the shades in the picture.)

But the horror came when some entrepreneur tried to sell "Rainbow tomato plant seeds". Think about it - the plant was grafted, so if you take a seed from any one of the colors - that's what you will get (red from red, yellow from yellow). There's no way in the world any one seed will grow up to be a rainbow plant. Scam, scam, scam.

(photo banggood.com)

Happiness radiates like the perfume of a flower

When spring has a hard time coming (are we there yet), what happens to those poor little plants who have started to grow and then get hit with either a snowstorm or late freeze? Mother Nature has for centuries been able to protect most bulbs like tulips and daffodils and they just seem to shake it off and keep on going. The real danger is for flowering buds on shrubs and trees - these are much more tender.

If your flowering buds had begun to form and break dormancy, your blooms may be history for the year, particularly on plants such as some hydrangeas which form flowering buds on old wood. Once the buds for the year have formed, a hard freeze can literally nip the blossoms in the bud, and seriously reduce or eliminate the flowers for the year. This is a major disappointment on ornamental flowering trees and shrubs, and even more of a let-down on fruiting trees, which will not set fruit without blossoms.

(Excerpt from Dave's Garden.com)

When planting onions, radishes or carrots, sprinkle the leaves from an opened tea bag in the row before planting them on top. This has kept root maggots away from my crops. —Joanne Hamilton, Randleman, North Carolina

this is from a magazine not the internet so we can only assume it works - but you'll have to try for yourself

Since 2000 "Journey North" has been keeping track of Monarch Butterfly migration south and then north again in the spring. To read more about Monarchs, their long trips, and other interesting facts, see: <https://journeynorth.org/monarchs/news/spring-2019/041119-three-cheers-milkweed> To watch the 2019 migration progress see: <https://maps.journeynorth.org/map/?year=2019&map=monarch-adult-first>

And speaking of butterflies - join us for our regular monthly Horticultural meeting on Wednesday, April 17th when Victoria Waltham-Kingsley will be giving a presentation on "Attracting Bees & Butterflies to the Garden"

The same night Doug Anderson will be leading a mini workshop on making a butterfly house.



Your butterfly house should be placed in a sunny location in the garden away from prevailing winds. It should be mounted on a pole or tree about 4 feet off the ground. Inside the house, place a couple slabs of tree bark in a vertical position. This is to provide the butterflies more shelter and something to cling to. Be sure that the bark is not blocking the entrance.



Our March meeting had a presentation on "Yarden Art" where there were lots of fun ideas for Do-it-Yourself projects to decorate your yard and garden areas.

Saturday, April 13th was the District 7 Spring AGM. Each of the 14 societies in the District is always to bring an item for a door prize. Harriston's donation was "Abigail" a recycled glassware angel whose halo is a butterfly drinking/splash pad. This DIY project was won by Cathy Watkins from the Arthur Hort. Society.

During the meeting tribute was paid to Dorelene Anderson whose term on the District Board has been completed. Her leadership as a Director was exemplary and at the same time she always found time to create floral arrangements for both the local and District competitions, plus being a keen instigator of fun and entertainment at O.H.A. Convention time.

But few know how she got started. For years Dorelene entered floral designs and specimens in the local Fall Fairs. Eventually she was well enough known for her successful efforts that she was asked to be a

judge. This she did without hesitation but after a few years she started to second-guess herself - was she really doing things right. So she enrolled herself in a Judging Course in London. A few years later (circa 1993) the then President Leonard Patterson, asked her if she would like to join the Harriston Horticultural Society. Not only did she join - Dorelene started right off as a Director.

Dorelene Anderson may have completed her term on the District Board, but she's not finished yet.....she's co-partnering with OHA Past President Rose O'dell in leading the upcoming 3 yr. Judging Course



Dorelene Anderson after receiving a huge pink hydrangea as a thank-you for serving her term as Director on the District 7 Board (Willa Wick photo)

Also at the AGM congratulations were applauded and an award given to a sister group. The Arthur Horticultural Society has achieved century status this year. Although small in numbers (the photo represents half of their total membership) they're an active group who still manage to get things done around the village..



(Willa Wick photo)

Below is your District 7 Board for 2019/20 being installed today by OHA representative Barb O'Malley



(left) Jane McDonald (Past District Director); Debbie Williams (Treasurer); Mildred Francis, Laurel Strachan (hidden); Connie DiPisa; Vic Palmer; Frances Bouma (Secretary); Julia Dimakos; Kathy Bouma (District Director); Barb O'Malley (OHA Representative)

Did you know that any spring allergies that leave you with itchy watery eyes, sneezes, and nasal congestion, does not come from early flowers (which have heavy pollen). Springtime plant allergies come from wind-blown tree pollen (which involves most of our local trees and shrubs).

Robert Pavlis has de-bunked another social media gardening myth. Gelatin is not a fertilizer nor is it a good source of nitrogen for the garden. <https://www.gardenmyths.com/gelatin-powder-plants-source-nitrogen/#more-5897>

It's a given that any Mennonite house wife starts her own tomato plants. If you want to can tomato products, you need tomato plants in your garden. Joanna Steckle remembers her first garden seed order - it was a staggering \$30. Turns out that's the least she's ever spent on seeds.

Like most, she started with seed containers in window sills, then graduated to a three-shelf rack in front of the patio doors (what a luxury to have slanted 24" deep shelves). By 2001 a lean-to greenhouse was built in the ell of the old red brick house - at 10x16 feet this was huge with two layers of shelves around the perimeter and a work table in the centre. It wasn't long until the thing was so full they had several farm wagons out in the yard loaded with flats of transplants for their growing market gardening/cut flower business. When the new house was built in 05/06, they had to decide whether to go bigger or stop - and it seemed a shame to stop.



(Joanna Steckle photo)

Next came a 30x96 foot greenhouse (a *real* one as Joanna says). There was much to learn, but three years later up went two more, tripling the square footage of greenhouse activity. The hobby status has been left far behind and after ten years of large size greenhouses there's a lot more at stake now than with that first \$30 seed order.

Every Mother's Day Weekend (May 10/11th) is the yearly Open House. This is a great time to visit as things get picked over quickly. Discount is given to Horticultural members until June 8th.



For several P.A. Days a year the Horticultural Society partners with the library staff to bring an awareness of plants to many area youth. On Friday, June 7th the children will be making a Father's Day planter. Rather than the usual black plastic gallon pot, this year we are going to try to have them be really creative. Plans are to have each kid design their own face container.

Since we usually have upwards of 30 youth - that's a lot of white jugs we have to gather during the next six weeks. So if you're emptying a two-litre bleach jug or similar in the next little while - please save it for us.



IMBOLC - Celebrate the Seed! Enjoy LOCALLY GROWN heirloom seeds and plants grown naturally chemical free. Organic, the way nature intended.

Kat Granger has her heirloom plant base near Fergus. On Saturday and Sunday May 18th & 19th her heirloom plants go on sale. (9 a.m. - 1 p.m.)

Granger was a energetic speaker at last year's AGM. So if you're making the rounds to go to various plant sales - add this one at 495 Anderson Street South in Fergus.

At the Harriston meeting on Wednesday, April 17th Mary Anne Connell will be giving tips on how to prepare and groom specimens for a Flower Show.

These are hints to remember as you gear up and look for all the blooms you're going to be able to enter in the May 15th Spring Flower Show.

Entry information for arrangements, individual specimens, potted plants etc can be found on page 22/23 of your yearbook.

It used to be called Arbor Day and school kids (especially in the rural schools) spent the morning tidying up the schoolyard, raking leaves, and sometimes even painting fence posts. In the afternoon we were allowed to go fishing in the river not far from the school.

Now known as Earth Day since 1970, it has become an important day across the world. The goal of Earth Day is to continue to fight for a clean environment. In 2019 Earth Day is Monday, April 22nd.



Because the Harriston Society has been involved with the Norwell District Secondary School LEAF program it's always interesting to watch their progress. Recently this was posted on the LEAF Twitter page. Congrats to Madison and Cassandra for being accepted to Ridgetown College [@RidgetownCampus](https://www.ridgetowncollege.ca/). Agriculture was not on their radar in September. Thanks to all those LEAF supporters who helped inspire them to a future in Ag!

The June 1st Garden Festival posters and bookmarks as well as raffle tickets are now in circulation.

We are down in numbers for vendors this year so if you stumble across someone who might like to have a spot in our line-up, get them to contact Linda Campbell ASAP. Their venue might not be in time to be advertised in the brochure, but that doesn't mean there isn't room for them on the pavilion grounds.

As soon as the soil is ready and you're dividing perennials don't forget to pot up a few extra for our own plant sale area.

(Unfortunately others have picked that same day for their plant sale i.e. Mount Forest Hort. Society.)



Another reminder that the Wednesday April 17th meeting is the Annual Silent Auction.

New, slightly used, or re-gifted items are welcome

Let Linda Campbell know what you have so she can make up the bidding sheet. Better yet, get her to email you a copy so you can make up your own - that will make things go faster for arranging on tables that night (and don't forget to bring things in early)

The April 17th meeting should be interesting. Lots of activity going on - Silent Auction; Speaker on "Attracting Bees and Butterflies to the Garden"; Butterfly House workshop; and hints for preparing specimens for a Flower Show. All this plus a bit of business and as always - refreshments.

Happy Easter Everyone



The **Gardening Gems Newsletter** is published monthly by the Harriston and District Horticultural Society. Established in 1952 we now have 212 members.
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