

HARRISTON & DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

GARDENING GEMS

Volume 5, Issue 1

January 2021



Iris versicolor –
Harriston emblem



Happy New Year



There is no crystal ball to tell us what's going to happen next, or when that "next" will be, but in the meantime there's lots we can be doing to while away the empty hours. Step out of your comfort zone for once and join one of the many Zoom presentations that are available. Recently your District 7 Director Kathy Bouma and I registered for a Zoom presentation by a horticultural society in Calgary Alberta. A little far reaching, yes, but it was a great talk on how important white and pastel colors are in your gardens

Mail order seeds and gardening in general were at record-breaking levels last year and this season will be no different. Don't just wait for the catalogues in the mail, or the seed racks to appear in the stores – get online and search out new and different things. Not sure where to look – just Google "mail order seed companies in Canada" (that will keep you busy for several hours), and if you go that far, then try something you've never planted before, or even better, something you've never even heard of before.

Try a new project. This one is easy – I found it and posted to my Facebook page. Several have tried it and the results were fantastic. WINTER SUN CATCHER: 1. Gather some natural materials (small cones, twigs, orange slices, berries etc. 2. Arrange in a pie plate or plastic container, have some twine or yarn for a hanger. 3. Cover with water and make sure the string is well under water. 4. Put in freezer or leave outside overnight in the cold. 5. Carefully remove from container and hang where you can watch the sun reflect on the ice to make your collection shine.



Past President Sue Bridge and her granddaughter Evvy thought this looked like a fun craft so they tried it and the results were super pleasing.

As usual the designs are limited only by imagination. Maybe the same type of thing could be done by mixing suet and peanut butter, stirring in nuts, seeds and fruit and having your own sun catcher bird feeder

Trivia: Did you know petunias are relatives of tomatoes.



even catch fire due to the added energy flow.”

If you're using a space heater this winter, be careful. Plug it directly into the wall and keep the area around it clear. The weather is getting colder, and people are pulling out their heaters. Just wanted to remind you that you should never plug a heater into a power strip, Umatilla County Fire District #1 in Hermiston, Oregon, warned on Facebook. “These units are not designed to handle the high current flow needed for a space heater and can overheat or

(Oregon Fire Department)

Are you giving up composting just because it's winter?

First to remember is that the compost has to be fed the right balance of green (nitrogen) and brown (carbon) ingredients. Green scraps will be produced in your kitchen over the winter, but most of the brown matter such as dried leaves, straw and plant debris, will have been produced in the fall. Gather the fall leaves and bag them, or put them in a dry place near the compost, to balance the green scraps that are added through the winter.

Even in the coldest weather, the microbes in the compost must be kept active. Move the bin into the sun for the winter or into a warmer part of the yard. Start building with a layer of leaves, or with straw, cardboard or sawdust. Put the active part in the middle, and then cover it with more brown matter. This insulates the active compost.

Compost tumblers are the most efficient closed-bin systems and make year-round composting relatively easy. A composting tumbler is a bin on a support, so it can be spun to mix the contents. The tumbler has some form of aeration, such as vents, spikes or a perforated tube running up the center for airflow. Its self-containment makes it easy to move, and the dark color helps keep the tumbler warm. Continued feeding with both green and brown matter can keep the bacteria alive and working.

Compost piles are the simplest composting system, since most organic material left on the ground will eventually compost

Why would anyone want to brave cold and snow just to take scraps out to the compost? Fortunately, there are ways to deal with waste materials over the winter without having to face the winter head-on. One solution is an **insulated sealed composter** that sits in a corner of the garage. A sealed composter with proper balance of carbon and nitrogen components will not emit any composting odors.

(excerpts from Garden Gate Magazine)



Once again we are saddened to lose another Harriston Society member. Mabel Mercier had at one time been a very dedicated member and an avid participant in flower shows both in design and specimen entries. She also became a floral judge. Mabel had two stints as President in 1986 & '87 and again in 1996 & '97.

Because of failing health Mrs. Mercier had not been able to attend society meetings for the past several years.

A donation to the OHA memorial fund has been made and her name will appear in the huge logbook of deceased members.

**January brings the snow
Makes our feet and fingers glow**

(Sara Coleridge 1802-52)

CHRISTMAS LORE AND THE HARVEST

Much of the traditional weather folklore was about predicting the following year's harvest:

If there is much wind on Christmas Day, trees will bear much fruit.

A windy Christmas is a sign of a good year to come.

If you remember – Christmas Day 2020 was very windy and stormy – if old traditions hold true we should have a great year ahead of us gardening wise.

AS THE DAY LENGTHENS, THE COLD STRENGTHENS.

As you may know, the winter solstice occurred on December 21st. This is the day when the sun is farthest south and the duration of daylight is least. With the sun at its weakest, you might expect that this would be the coldest day, but it is not! Think about what happens when you put a tray of water in the freezer. It does not become ice instantly, because it first has to give off its stored heat. The same thing happens with earth, so the coldest period occurs, on average, about a month after the winter solstice, even though there is more sunlight then. Hence the coldest temperatures typically occur as days are getting longer.

(excerpts from the Farmer's Almanac)

If anyone is interested in having a copy of the latest Trillium magazine – Dorelene Anderson ran off pages – contact her at dandd@wightman.ca or (519) 338-3467

Almost everyone loves to watch birds at feeders in the wintertime. Birds eat from trees and shrubs with berries still hanging on. This adds beauty, movement and color as they visit. Attract more, and keep them in your yard longer, by building a pretty bird-feeding obelisk covered in other important energy sources – another fun project that you could try.




To see how *Garden Gate* magazine describes it look for further details and ideas at:

https://www.gardengatemagazine.com/newsletter/2020/12/17/bird-feeding-obelisk/?utm_medium=email&_hsmt=103149166&_hsenc=p2ANqtz---f1o8A0bQWTIVBH1JGZvtUIVhIYNUfPmTM6i-rpDGHRC0wMYG25q7hxyDrwL8LVk0EQncgUlg8Z_FrdnOKywVDgmR3w&utm_content=103149166&utm_source=hs_email

Just by reading the article you'll be inspired with different ideas.





National Handwriting Day was January 23! Do you suppose this will continue for many years now that cursive is no longer taught in schools?








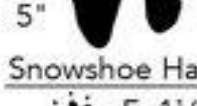

For all those who like to walk in the fresh snow - this chart with the footprints of various animals may be useful to you in identifying your furry friends.



MASS WILDLIFE

Pocket Guide to Animal Tracks

Track Pattern	 White-Tailed Deer 2 1/2" - 3"	 Moose 4 1/2" - 5 1/2"	
Track Pattern	 Dog: 2 1/4" - 4"	 Coyote H: 2 1/4" F: 2 1/2"	Track Pattern
Track Pattern	 Red Fox H: 2" F: 2 1/4"	 Gray Fox H: 1 3/4" F: 1 1/2"	Track Pattern
Track Pattern	 Bobcat: 2"	 House Cat: 1 1/8"	Track Pattern
Track Pattern	 Otter: 3 1/4"	 Fisher: 2 1/4"	Track Pattern
Track Pattern	 Mink: 1 5/8"	 Weasel: 1/2" - 1"	Track Pattern
Tracks Not To Scale Tracks will show considerable variation depending upon conditions of ground (snow, mud, dust, sand, etc.) and movement of animal.			
		F: Front Track H: Hind Track T: Tail marks may be present	

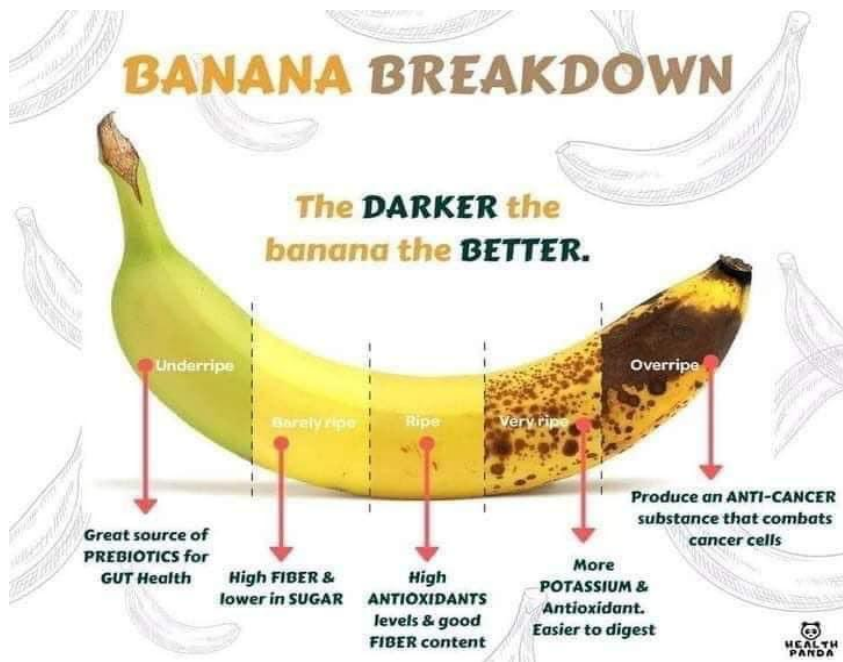
Track Pattern	 Raccoon H: 4" F: 2 1/2"	 Striped Skunk H: 1 1/2" F: 1 1/2"	
Track Pattern	 Porcupine H: 3" F: 2 1/2"	 Beaver H: 6" T	Track Pattern
Track Pattern	 Black Bear H: 7-9" F: 4 1/2"	 Opossum H: 2" F: 1 3/4" T	Track Pattern
Track Pattern	 Woodchuck H: 2 1/4" F: 2"	 Muskrat H: 1 1/2" F: 1"	Track Pattern
Track Pattern	 Snowshoe Hare H: 5" F: 1 1/2"	 Cottontail Rabbit H: 4" F: 1"	Track Pattern
Track Pattern	 Gray Squirrel H: 2 1/4" F: 1 1/2"	 White-Footed Mouse H: 5/8" F: 1/4"	Track Pattern
		Crow: 2 1/2"	Track Pattern
		Turkey: 4"	Track Pattern
		Ruffed Grouse: 2"	Track Pattern

MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581
 p: (508) 389-6300 | e: mass.wildlife@mass.gov

[MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE](https://www.mass.gov/masswildlife)

Without having normal monthly meetings we have to rely on a few emails and this newsletter to bring news of events or executive decisions to the membership at large. In the December newsletter we advised that a decision had been made to order another picnic bench from Weathered Minto, and have the top rail being a memorial with the names of Irene Fudger and Margaret Weber laser engraved.

With the recent death of Mabel Mercier it has been further decided to add the third name. The bench will be the same lime green color to provide consistency among the various Horticultural Society's outdoor furniture no matter where they may be located throughout the town.



Well this is an interesting little tidbit posted by Canada Banana Farms Wingham & Blyth.

After an absence for a year or two they are now up and running again – a totally organic, off-the-grid greenhouse grower of vegetables and tropical fruits year round.

The Harriston Society tried for a summer tour there a couple of years ago but it didn't pan out – maybe it's still on the radar since the farm is under new ownership and wants to involve the community.

See: <https://canadabananafarms.ca/>

None of our members took the suggestion to design a floral arrangement following the outlines from the Toronto Gardening Club Design/Photo competition.

However, the challenge to forward pictures of your Soup 'n Sandwich lunch in the absence of our annual event, did receive a couple of entries.



Janna Dodds was quick to respond with her bowl of gluten and dairy- free mushroom soup along with toasted cheese sandwiches.

Janna prepares meals daily for her aging parents so presumably this tasty luncheon was enjoyed by the whole family.



Linda Campbell decided to fancy up her tray containing a bowl of chili with ham & cheese sandwiches, and a bit of fruit. A doilie and little vase of flowers like this would make a nice treat for a shut-in



Meanwhile Willa Wick had a pot of black beans, barley, and split peas simmering in spicy tomato juice all afternoon (oh the joys of a wood stove).

Cut-up leftover beef, hot peppers and juice plus quinoa were added during the last half hour. A plate of crackers and cheese was added instead of a sandwich.

It was fun this month to have input from the membership. Below we see the creation and collection of Tony and Krista Hale (Krista is the daughter of our long time members Don and Joanne Matthews).



Krista's little collection of succulents and cacti has slowly grown over the years (and more rapidly as of late). *Succulents are plants that store water in their stems or leaves. That's what gives them their chubby appearance and indeed their name: it comes from Latin succulentus for "full of juice." All prefer to be more on the dry side than the damp one. Most prefer full sun and soil that drains thoroughly.*

Because the plants needed to be in a full sun window Tony constructed a water resistant tray so there would not be drips and dribbles to ruin the wooden window sill



And still a double-decker stand had to be constructed to house the overflow.

That's what you call a husband dedicated to the happiness of his plantaholic wife.

Think Minto First

Once again we are going to have the "Think Minto First" as our spring fundraiser. It will obviously be different this year. Organizer Sue Bridge will have forms available for distribution. As well, PDF forms will be forwarded to all members in an email. They can be printed, filled out, and returned. Further details will be forthcoming; we just wanted you to know that the program is still a go. New businesses have been added this year.



The **Gardening Gems Newsletter** is published monthly by the Harriston and District Horticultural Society. Established in 1952 we now have 212 members. President: Jean Anderson Past President: Sue Bridge Secretary/Newsletter editor: Willa Wick Treasurer: Joanna Steckle Comments/ suggestions/new ideas - willawick@wightman.ca