

## APRIL 2019

I always start with the WEATHER. 'It's Spring again, and birds on the wing again, start to sing again the old melody.' That is all I have to say about the lovely weather.

Customers and friends (Wait, my customers are my friends.) always ask me, "How was your winter?" My answer is the same as other years; had big plans as to what I would get accomplished, didn't do it.

The MICE, however, accomplished quite a lot. They chewed the roots of our nice drift roses outside the fence, completely killed one, two more are shaky and several more sustained some damage. What I called them is unprintable in this G-rated letter. Andy says moth crystals around bushes will put them off. Any other ideas? Poison is not an option with birds and chickens.

Here is a decision that may affect you. I have decided to be CLOSED ON SUNDAYS this season. We always hear, often from you people, about the wonderful gardens, tours, markets, parks etc. and we never get to go there. This is the 'on the road' year.

On that note, last Sunday we went to the SCOTT ARBORETUM at Swarthmore College.

Go there! Many, many (they say 4000) plants and trees, all well marked and cared for. You walk around the college campus, through wooded trails if you like and also admire some of the beautiful buildings. And it is all free. It is about a 45 minute drive, but don't go during rush hour because you must go out the Blue Route

I believe many of us lost more plants and shrubs than usual this year. It wasn't really the cold, it was the wet. Lavender especially suffers from wet feet and sometime never recovers. Hidcote is the most likely to get over being mostly top-killed. Cut off the dead and very weak, clean out the leaves and don't mulch!

Help! We have five different varieties of BEE BALM in stock and the Jacob Kline is out of control! In case you don't know, Jacob Cline is the tall red variety that is mildew resistant. Others are Marshall's Delight (pink), Purple

**Rooster, Blue Stocking and Raspberry Wine. I have white if you want it, but be warned, it's very invasive.**

**Can you believe that the State of New Jersey tax commission, in its infinite wisdom, has set the SALES TAX RATE at 6.625%? Very frustrating. It means I have to use the calculator for every transaction.**

**As I am sure I have mentioned before, I HATE GROUND IVY. I must admit, though, that when it is having its moment it is pretty. Apparently, it is also appealing to our insects. I was very surprised to see a big bumblebee passing by all the blooming violets to work the ground ivy.**

**We have a NEW GOOSE! If you hate geese, skip this section. Our female goose, Gracie, has for the past two years laid eggs and set on them faithfully only to hatch nothing. The reason? Our gander is 31 years old and while he is willing, he is no longer a 'good' gander. So I took action. I ordered four fertile buff goose eggs online and we exchanged them with her non-hatching eggs. So why the new goose if we are expecting goslings? Our gander is so lonely with Gracie on the nest most of the time, he was driving us nuts with his loud incessant honking. Therefore we got him a girlfriend. Now he is quiet, but the new goose is loud. Oh well, she will settle. We are due to hatch May 10.**

**Angus also had a pretty HEN I couldn't resist...**

**Did you seem a bit short of butterflies last year? We did. Look around your property for PRAYING MANTIS EGGS. These voracious insects eat your butterflies, they eat your caterpillars and a big praying mantis can even catch a hummingbird. I was shocked to see nine praying mantis egg masses in a shrub nearest our best milkweed area where we always have caterpillars. I removed them and will be more vigilant in the future.**

**A few years ago I was weeding my perennial bed and found many butterfly wings under a phlox. There was the praying mantis, sitting in the blooms, waiting for butterflies. He found a new home somewhere with the grasshoppers and crickets.**

We have in stock AQUILEGIA CANADENSIS, the native columbine I love with the red and yellow blooms. There doesn't seem to be a common name for this plant. I have seen it called 'Little Lanterns' and several other names. Anyway, come and get it, you will love it, too. Likes a bit of shade.

Our variety spotlight this issue falls on STOKES' ASTER (*stokesia laevis*) Botanically, it is not an aster, but looks like one. It is native to coastal areas south of us but is generally hardy here. Annd it doesn't mind our sandy soil. It comes in various colors of fine big fluffy blooms. Named after Jonathan Stokes, English physician/botanist (1755-1831), we have the variety 'Honeysong Purple.'

MIGRATORY MINT Sometimes I forget my own advice. I have several big assorted pots out by the road. I was looking at one and asking myself, "Why is this orange mint popping up here and there?" Oh, that's right, mint moves from where you plant it. The original plant? Dead.

We all have our TO DO LISTS whether mental or physical, but sometimes you need to throw your list out the window (virtually, of course) and do what has been bugging you the most. For example, we have an enormous white butterfly bush that we have both been picking at when we have a minute walking by it. Two days ago I had enough and just finished pruning the whole thing. Should have been doing many other things like maybe writing this newsletter but it was bugging me.

And sometimes you must rise to the occasion and do what you must do, like RUNNING.

#1 You all know we have chickens. You also probably know we have foxes. I was working in the market when I heard squawking and saw the fox making off with one of my hens. I gave chase and the fox kept losing her grip. I was gaining at a fast clip and she dropped the hen and ran off. The hen settled her ruffled feathers and went back to the barn.

#2 Andy was working under the hood of our baby Volvo, changing the fuel filter. He started the engine and saw to his horror that one of the clips was leaking drops of gas onto the hot manifold, making a little fizzing sound. He turned off the engine and made it to the house and back faster than a speeding bullet with the fire extinguisher. Thankfully, no fire. You do what you hafta.

**HERB STUFF** The rues look great this year. Get one of two for your swallowtails. Nothing else eats it. If your rue gets gangly over time, cut back hard to new growth in spring.

Come and get your parsley before I kill it. It looks really good right now if a bit small, but parsley and I do not get on well together. I guess I am not boss of the house. ☹

We have five varieties of lavender and five varieties of rosemary. What's in a name? Phenomenal lavender is very popular. I have yet to plant one myself.

I don't know if you ever notice the STAMP on your newsletter. Newest one out is a Peace rose, which is my favorite and the only hybrid tea I own. It says PEACE rose. Clever.

**PERENNIAL STUFF** We have two colors of Buzz butterfly bushes, sky blue and magenta. That is the variety that stays a reasonable size without much pruning.

No Snow Lady shorter shastas, but I got one called 'Adorable' which is kind of mounding with lots of short blooms. Also have a fluffy one called 'Banana Cream'.

We have a new penstemon. It is named 'Dark Towers' and has burgundy foliage like 'HuskerRed'. The difference is that the blooms are pink.

Balloon flowers are so indestructible. They just keep coming back, in the ground, in a pot.

**In case you've forgotten how to tell BUMBLEBEES from CARPENTER BEES, bumblebees have a furry rear, carpenter bees have a shiny one. It's pretty obvious. Male carpenter bees can't sting, females will if you pick them up and squeeze them. Males sometimes act aggressive but it's all bluff.**

**Last year I told you about a weird trick to repel carpenter bees, stuffing a brown paper bag and hanging it up so they think it is a hornets' nest. Believe it or not, it seems to work! Try it and report back.**

**I have set myself a CRUSADE. I want to get our little Mount Laurel State Park on the list of state parks and recognized as the smallest state park, sixteen acres. In case you don't know, our park is on the corner of Hainesport-Mt. Laurel Road and Moorestown- Mt. Laurel Road back of Farmers' Hall. It is a nice little park with marked trails, lots of up and down and a few benches. This is the Mount in Mount Laurel. If you look at the State map of parks and trails, it is there, but when you go to the lists, it is gone. I intend to fix that.**

**I am considering a mailing list PURGE, but I hate to do it. Perhaps if your tastes have changed, if you stopped by on a whim and will never come back or if I offended you in some way (nah, I am too nice for that) you could email me and I will take you off the list.**

**Remember, Andy sharpens tools for a nominal fee. If it's hopeless, he will tell you.**