

Springville Herbary

515 Hartford Road

Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054

856-235-5488 or cell 856-630-9185

www.springvilleherbary.com

email: mojo@springvilleherbary.com

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The INTERNET always has surprises for me. Last spring, I was amazed to see that I was permanently closed. This year I was surprised to see that I am open before I am open. There is a picture of the house three doors down as my market. Oh well, at least they gave me five stars! And that is the internet.

We are, of course, now officially open.

The BABY HERBS all look great, but we have had to keep them under wraps a bit with temperatures in the low 30's at night. By now they should be hardened off and able to cope. I am kicking myself and Andy is kicking me for not making the greenhouse bigger. It would have been sooooo simple to include one or two more of the hoops which are already there.

Did you LOSE MORE PLANTS than usual this winter? Quite a few of my hardy carry-overs turned up their toes. A persistently cold winter is better for most plants than one that fluctuates wildly temperature wise. Add to that all the rain and no snow. Some of the plants just drowned in their pots.

Oddly, the CATNIP loved this year's weather. We have so many big, gorgeous plants, some potted up ready for you to take home to your kitties, or use yourself for a soothing tea. We can also cut a bunch for you if you don't wish to plant it.

COME AND BUY #1. The County Ag Center on Centerton Road is having a Spring Garden Market on Saturday, April 29th from 10 AM to 2 PM. We will be one of the vendors. There will be all kinds of plants and plant related goods, prepared food and live music. On a sad note, the Center sustained quite a bit of damage from the big storm several weeks ago. One of the silos had the top portion destroyed and is being removed. Also, the sheep farmers' house and barns were damaged. Our best thoughts are with them for a good recovery.

COME AND BUY#2. My Mount Laurel Garden Club will be having their yearly perennial sale at the Mount Laurel Library on Saturday, May 6. You never know what plants and shrubs may show up from the members' gardens. Every year I buy kerria (Look it up) and plant it in my sandy soil and every year it dies. Perhaps I need a bucket of Mark's WV clay. (You remember my son Mark, the one with the green thumb.)

On a personal note, I had ankle replacement **SURGERY** IN December. It is being a long, frustratingly slow recovery. I am not sure who has suffered more, me or Andy who had to do **everything** for a long time. He has picked up some new skills, including a fair amount of basic cooking. I could probably get real money for him on the open market! One predictable consequence of all that down time was an increase in my poundage due to a persistent good appetite.

Hello muffin top!

Remember, **MAY 15 IS YOUR FIRST REASONABLY SAFE DAY TO PLANT YOUR FROST-SENSITIVE ANNUAL FLOWERS AND VEGETABLES**

BIRD REPORT: Skip this section if you don't care about birds. The little red-breasted nuthatch showed up after being missing for several years. They are so cute and tiny and such fun to watch.

We have had many male red-winged blackbirds, but almost no females. No idea why. I know sometimes the males come back first, but the females should be here by now. I am still calling the crows when I put out food for them. They usually answer and we have had as many as six. I know some people don't like crows for various reasons but I think they are cool.

Most of you have probably heard of the **GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT** sponsored by Cornell lab of ornithology and the National Audubon Society. We participated this year for the first time. It was really easy. You can commit for a large block of time or as little as twenty minutes. It happens over a long weekend in February. Reporting is done online and the website is well set up to use even if you are lousy on the computer. You should do it!

I saw my first **BUMBLEBEE** April 2nd on the pulmonaria. By the way, if you have pulmonaria, it should be blooming now. It blooms so early, people tend to miss it.

Like CARROTS? Go to Shoprite now and buy a big bag of Dorot brand carrots from Israel. It is obviously the new crop and they are the sweetest, crunchiest carrots you will ever have.

Our HELLEBORES are amazing. Of course, they started blooming in January and will continue forever. One is about three feet across. The 'New York Nights' has almost black flowers (Sorry, couldn't get those this year) We do have three varieties for you, two new for us. Bring your mortgage.

What is it about black flowers? Aren't they kind of weird? Nevertheless, I will search diligently for black pansies or petunias which I usually kill.

Our cow, DELLA, is now 26 years old. She has slowed down quite a bit and had a couple of incidents when we had to have help to get her on her feet, but she looks great. Believe it or not, our new neighbor came over with his front-end loader and gently used the scoop to put her in a position to get up. Cows cannot lay flat out on their side for many hours. All their digestion stops and that is the end.

We were so happy last year with our FENCED GARDEN that we are almost doubling the size. I know, I know. Twice the garden means twice the planting, twice the weeding, twice the harvesting, etc. etc. We will see. At least we know we should have enough okra, zinnias, tithonias, cosmos. Maybe we will try string beans, cucumbers, beets, even a few pumpkins or gourds. Ah, the folly. Best laid plans.

The FENCED MARKET has also worked out well. Not only did we not have deer eating our stock, but my little butterfly garden had flowers blooming in it that haven't bloomed for years.

I had the most incredible Stoke's aster in the market plants.. I refused to sell it until I saw it bloom. Yes, I have them for you. And they are native.

We have fenced a small additional area where I want to grow a few POTATOES. Andy has never dug potatoes and I always enjoyed digging them for my father's harvest. I was shocked to find out that some growers spray herbicide on their potato plants for an earlier harvest instead of letting them die naturally.

Besides my usual favorite cutting ZINNIAS, (State Fair, cactus flower, peppermint stick) I have ordered seeds for red spider zinnias. They are a bit of different plant from other zinnias. I grew them a few years ago and was surprised when they bloomed to see the flowers are about the size of..well..spiders. Maybe no one will like them, but that's ok. I need to grow a few things for myself.

If you have BUTTERFLY BUSHES, it is getting near the time to cut them back if you choose to do so. Some people like to cut them very short and start over each year. This makes me nervous because a late frost can damage new growth and set them back. I cut mine back to good-looking new growth, whether it's one, two or three feet. Actually, if you have the space, you don't have to cut back at all. There is a white one in the pasture that must be at least twelve feet tall.

Looking for a SHADE GROUND COVER? I recommend leadwort (*ceratostigma plumbago*) Less than a foot tall, attractive glossy leaves, one of the few plants with cobalt blue flowers and you can't kill it with a baseball bat!

A perennial native flower that was a lot of fun last year was GIANT CONEFLOWER (*rudbeckia maxima*) which as you can see, is not a coneflower at all, but a member of the black-eyed Susans. They have enormous base leaves and will go up to seven feet before blooming with no staking needed. I don't know if deer like them, but they probably do.

CALLERY PEARS. "What," you ask, "is a callery pear?" You know all those trees that are everywhere and blooming white right now? We have been calling them Bradford pears, but they are actually a variety of callery pear (*pyrus calleryana*), a Chinese tree introduced to Europe in the 1800's by one Joseph-Marie Callery. He wasn't even a botanist, he just thought it was a neat tree. Then the USDA introduced them in Glendale, MD in the 60's as an ornamental. Now they are an invasive on most of the East coast and the mid-west. Thank you very much Mr. Callery and the USDA. You succeeded beyond your wildest expectations!

We have potted up some variegated Solomon's seal for your shade garden. They look so funny when they first come up; like a bunch of pink worms standing up out of the ground.

STUFF THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH PLANTS OR GROWING: At a store in Beckley, WV, we bought sugar coated fennel seeds. They are pink and white like Good and Plenty and taste great. Crunchy.

For Christmas, my son Mark (You remember Mark) bought us a little speaker called a Tribit. You can link it to your phone or computer and take it quite a distance away for music or any programs. I use it a lot to stream my hometown radio station. Have I ever mentioned WJEradio.com? Of course I have. Currently there is a funny pic of our cat Brodie posted on their website.

If you have seen me around since July, you know I have been wildly coloring my hair. The brand name I use is Manic Panic and it is super easy to use. Andy is my colorist. It is semi-

permanent and my hair began to look a bit unhappy so I let it grow out over winter. Now I am ready for green.

Once again I ask you; Are you chewing your way through your shrubs and plants? Could you do it faster with your teeth? Don't waste effort and ruin your expensive pruners, not to mention mutilating your victims. For a small fee Andy will sharpen any of your cutters. He can usually have them in a day or two. Mt. Laurel Garden Club members get free sharpening. No scissors, please.

Come see us,

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In spring when the green gits back in the trees,
And the sun comes out and stays,
And yer boots pulls on with a good tight squeeze,
And you think of yer bare-foot days;
When you ort to work and you want to not,
And you and your wife agrees
It's time to spade up the garden lot,
When the green gits back in the trees James Whitcomb Riley
Well! Work is the least of my idees
When the green, you know, gits back in the trees!