

July 2021

This newsletter then is a **BLATANT ADVERTISEMENT** for our market, including the Burl. Co. Farmers Market. We have pretty much everything you could possibly want and it all looks great. Five varieties of lavender; five varieties of sage including white sage for cleansing; bronze fennel, rue and lovage for your swallowtails (parsley on small side); plenty of lemon verbena including one enormous plant and so on.

I am quite proud of producing a nice crop of salad burnet. Tastes like cucumber, perennial, almost evergreen, and a pretty plant besides. I also read somewhere that it makes a cute houseplant.

Our **NATIVE PLANT SELECTION** is looking pretty good. I am kind of excited to have swamp milkweed, purple coneflower, great blue lobelia (*lobelia siphilitica*), Joe Pye weed and white turtlehead (*chelone glabra*). We had cardinal flower but only a very few left.

Previous newsletter I talked about planting *rudbeckia triloba* seeds and having success with germination. They are not what I expected; called brown-eyed Susans, they are looking great and ready to go. They are considered a short-lived perennial, which means two or three years and will usually self sow.

Did you have any **CICADAS**? I can honestly say we did not see even one here. We saw some in Arlington and surrounding area in June, but not huge numbers as they expected.

Thankfully, our **GEESE** only hatched one baby. The two girls fought so over the eggs, rolling them back and forth from one nest to the other, it's amazing that any hatched. Of course, we don't know yet if boy or girl gosling but already as big as dad.

I am weak; I have no will power. After vowing to get **NO MORE CHICKENS**, I was tempted by my supplier beyond my resistance and acquired three buff Orpingtons and one big fluffy white Orpington (Poofey II). Getting a few eggs.

The **OSTRICH FERNS** we potted up were tougher than I thought. After totally collapsing and losing all their fronds, they had a vigorous surprising rebirth. I sold them, of course. One left.

My Wall Street Journal says there is quite a recent interest in **NATURAL POOLS**. That's right, no chlorine, swim among the water lilies and frogs. Yes,

they still have to be installed properly; yes, they still need regular maintenance including caring for the many plants recommended.

Nevertheless, it sounds like an interesting concept. Initial cost is about the same as a chlorine

pool, probably not including the plants.

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.

SAGE ADVICE as promised. Every year about this time I always remind you what to do with your blooming sage. When it is done blooming and you have at least several inches of new growth down inside the plant, cut off all the old growth with spent blooms down to the new growth. Yes, cut it off. You can do it. Otherwise in a few years you will have a big plant with long branches and tufts of leaves on the ends.

In my previous newsletter (which is still posted on our website, in case you missed it) I said that a fairly extensive LAVENDER paper would be posted under 'Apothecary' and I see it is not. My apologies and I will see that it is done.

BUTTERFLY REPORT Skip over this if you hate butterflies. Actually, not much to report yet. We have seen two American painted lady caterpillars which must be fairly numerous, we just don't usually see them. We haven't had very many black swallowtail caterpillars but we did see a female butterfly laying eggs on the bronze fennel a few days ago. I rescued a nessus sphinx moth from my greenhouse two days ago. This is a really cool-looking day-flying rather large moth with two bright yellow bands around its abdomen. Hopefully we are beginning to recover from the plague of praying mantises the last two years.

I have not been able to buy in 'ICE BALLETS' SWAMP MILKWEED for quite a long time so I bought seeds without much hope. To my amazement, one grew quite quickly and others followed over time, totalling seven. The last one took fully eight weeks to germinate! After babying them along in my little greenhouse to about average six inches, but not looking closely, I kind of suddenly realized they were being eaten by four Monarch caterpillars! Noooo! Not my Ice Ballet babies! In the greenhouse! Then tragedy struck. I went in to check on them and one was being eaten by a large praying mantis! In the greenhouse! I was so angry

I just put my foot on it and didn't even feed it to the chickens. Watch out for praying mantises, they are not your butterflies' friends.

Did you know that Brown's Mills has a population of genuine ALBINO DEER? They are protected from hunting. We have one around with a lot of white, but it is not likely an actual albino with the pink eyes and all that.

Do you have CATS OR DOGS in your house? You need to stay away from those plug-in oil dispersers. They spray tiny droplets that get in your animals' fur and subsequently get ingested by licking. Essential oils can be quite toxic, mostly causing digestive system damage.

Do our houses really stink that much? Do we need constant cover-up smells?

I did see an idea for dispensing oil smells that seems harmless. Put a basic thin oil in a narrow-necked bottle, add a few drops of essential oil and put in several bamboo skewers. They should absorb the oil and disperse the fragrance.

We are, as usual, battling the DEER. We are also feeding them cracked corn every night which yes, I know, is pretty dumb. I have had some luck with a spray of one tablespoon of Murphy's Oil Soap to a quart of water, but it must be done pretty much every night. One little button buck is getting quite tame. I hope he doesn't find the hunters in season.

Hooray! Both STATE FAIRS we always attend are on this year! West Virginia has a sign which counts down the days to the fair. Last year it was quite discouraging to see over 400 days on the sign.

PLANTING ANNUALS/PLANTING PERENNIALS They are not the same. If you are sure you know all about this, skip to next item. Perennials need to be planted at a certain depth with the crown or base of the plant at the proper place at surface of the soil. Many do not like mulch pushed right up around them and will respond with various fungi or get eaten by critters harboring in the mulch. Many annuals can and should be planted much deeper than their existing roots, even so far as up to their leaves. They will put out new roots the length of the stem and grow much sturdier. Just a few that will benefit from this are tomatoes, peppers, basil, zinnias, marigolds and celosias.

Here is the dreaded BOTANICAL NAME LESSON. A 'ch' in a botanical name is always pronounced like a 'k'. So 'stachys' (which is the lamb's ear family) is pronounced 'stake-es'. Agastache is ag-a-sta-ke. Easy?

ANDY HAS RETIRED as of mid June! How is that working out? We will get it figured out in time. He has been doing some jobs here that have been needing to be done and helping me out with market stuff. We have to learn to communicate better; sometimes we both do the same chore and sometimes it doesn't get done at all. Meals are total fiasco. We'll get it...

I am still president of the **MOUNT LAUREL GARDEN CLUB**. I am proud that we have continued to be active through all Covid time period. We had well attended zoom meetings with interesting programs and have maintained activities such as planting the Veterans Memorial in Laurel Acres Park, making wreaths for Township buildings and decorating a tree at Morven in Princeton. Interested? We will be resuming our regular meetings in September as always. We meet at the Mt. Laurel Community Center on the third Monday of the month at 11 AM. Check out our website. You don't have to wait till fall.

We are once again awash in **SPOTTED LANTERNFLIES**. They don't seem to do much damage except the sticky mess from the sap they drop. The red instars would make a pretty bracelet.

We are still using mostly what is officially called mechanical-physical control, short for smashing them.

Funny thing is, I cannot find any pictures of how those smallish red-spotted instars turn into those enormous adults. Where do they do it? Is it magic? Anyone?

“May I keep **PLANTING THROUGH THE SUMMER?**” I hear you asking. The answer is generally yes. Anytime you take a potted plant and put it in the ground or a larger pot, it is going to be happier as long as you are committed to adequate water. If you want to move a tree or shrub, divide perennials or seed a lawn (Do any of you have proper lawns?) I suggest you wait till fall.

Come see us. Ring the bell.