

## **JUNE 2018**

**Obligatory comment on the WEATHER: I am sure that the basils and tomatoes among others would like the weather a bit hotter but I am very happy we are having spring this year instead of winter into summer.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS from last newsletter:**

**The Alaska fern is alive.**

**We now have three colors of BALMY BEE BALM. Not a lot of rose, so if you want that, better come and get it. Plenty of pink and purple.**

**The goose eggs didn't hatch in spite of her vigilant setting. I suppose at age 30 our Knob is no longer a 'good' gander. Sad for her.**

**Last call until mid-August to try the Persian syrup. Call or email if interested.**

**My LAVENDER POLICY, right or wrong: We currently have five different varieties of lavender in stock. All of them are winter hardy, all of them are traditionally aromatic. The differences are in ultimate size and shape of plant, color of blooms and shade of green in foliage. All need full sun..**

**That being said, your LAVENDER should be blooming now, so here is some info on harvesting. Skip this section if you know what to do.**

**If you want your blooms to have color, cut as soon as the first flowers open and hang to dry. Some varieties may be already too far along for this. If you are making wands, stems must be flexible.**

**If you are only after the dried blooms you can wait till bloom is done, then harvest. Hanging is not necessary as slightly dried stems will be stiff. Don't wait till stems turn brown and start to drop. Fragrance will be shot.**

Obviously, you can choose to let your lavender bloom and not harvest it at all. You will need to trim blooms at some point to keep your plant looking good for next season.

ROBINS made a nest head high right beside our driveway. I thought it was a dumb choice but they successfully raised two babies. Of course they raised a fuss whenever they saw Marmalade or any other perceived threat.

Perennial GERANIUM (Not pelargonium) has always been on my list of plants deer don't eat. Then they came into my shade garden back of the house and delicately nibbled all the leaves off my two geraniums. But they stopped after two assaults and now both plants are quite large. On the list or off the list? I haven't decided. Need a list? Just ask.

Let us have a few words about those SCENTED GERANIUMS that are supposed to keep away mosquitoes. Do they work? I have heard many differing opinions. It may depend on the amount of mosquito pressure, in other words, how many mosquitoes you have around. Personally, I feel that any of the rose-scented ones are as helpful as the much more expensive citrosa. To that end, when I am working in the back of the market, I have been bringing my flat of rose geraniums with me and roughing them up every ten minutes or so. It could be stamping my foot to keep away the elephants (You all know that one, don't you?) but I haven't had mosquito problems there.

Is LADY'S MANTLE (*alchemilla mollis*) an herb? Yes and no. It is one of those plants with many possible uses, especially for women's problems, but not proven effective. As you may see from the botanical name, it was also somehow involved with alchemists quest for gold. From a historical perspective, inclusion in a medicinal garden is certainly proper. Oh yes, if you rub those pearly dew-drops on your face, they will keep the wrinkles away! In stock? How could I not? Sun if well watered, otherwise part shade.

**CARPENTER BEES** are eating my market! I don't usually worry about a few holes and a little sawdust but some of my roof beams are getting scary. One of my customers had a weird solution. She said to take a medium size brown bag, stuff it full of paper or plastic, tie it at the top and hang where bees are problem. They are supposed to think it is a hornets' nest. (Hornets kill and eat them) Will it work? We will find out.

We have a new critter hanging around; a very cute **SKUNK** who I have of course dubbed Flower. She seems to be fairly tame, no itchy trigger finger if you know what I mean. Andy wants to pick her up and hug her, but I think not a good idea.

While on the topic of skunks, I promised one of my neighbors the formula for cleaning spray. It's not 100% effective but pretty good. Keep out of eyes.

**Skunk remover:** 1 Qt. Hydrogen peroxide

1/4 cup baking soda

1 teas. dishwashing liquid

**Plants are so determined to grow,** sometimes anyplace will do. Back of our house is a door with two cement steps. In the crack between the steps, about one half inch, was growing violets, lemon balm, bittersweet, a black gum tree, one unknown weed and poison ivy. Amazing! As I have mentioned before, in a sidewalk type situation, all the moisture that falls goes in the cracks.

Andy says I shouldn't mention **TICKS** because then nobody will come here. I said, "Nah. Ticks are part of life." Anyway, the deer ticks have been horrendous this year and they especially love me. I am becoming quite flexible removing them from those hard-to-reach areas. I may be in the running for contortionist of the year!

**BUTTERFLY REPORT** I think it will be a good year for butterflies. The parsley is loaded with black swallowtails and I have already seen a tiger

swallowtail, several silver-spotted skippers and, surprisingly, a red-spotted purple.

As usual we are rampant with common milkweed but I haven't gotten in any swamp milkweed yet..

**I FOUND MY SEEDS!** I don't know about you, but I never get all the seeds planted that I buy. Until yesterday, I was mystified as to the whereabouts of last year's seed, most of which would still be viable if stored kinda properly. Then, there they were, in my shed, in a plastic container with a proper lid. Wow! Plenty of time to plant gourds and pumpkins, maybe even some odd basil and malabar spinach. Very exciting.

Call me crazy but after my installation next week, I will once again be President of the **MOUNT LAUREL GARDEN CLUB**. It is a fine group, very active in events and projects, including several scholarships for Mt. Laurel students, with good meetings and good food. We have two (2!) very active male members and a number of husbands who show up to help on projects. So fellows, if you are interested, you won't be alone. We meet at the Mt. Laurel Community Center the third Monday of the month, starting again in September. We are active all summer in several areas, so if you are interested, you don't have to wait till fall. Call me or check out our web site.

**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 GC members get free sharpening.

We would be rich if we didn't **FEED THE BIRDS**. Tractor Supply loves us.

As writer of this rag, I can put in pieces that have absolutely nothing to do with herbs or flowers. This is one of them.

**When my Mother went in the Home, I got the contents of my Grandmother's china closet (and the china closet itself) As I knew, in with the dishes and glassware was a bowl, which, as I also knew, was the christening bowl for my Grandmother and Uncle Bert, her younger brother. This was not a large bowl or very pretty and besides it was very badly cracked. What to do? I didn't feel I could just throw it in the trash. I decided to give it back. Two weeks ago I went to the cemetery in Woodsboro MD with the bowl and a trowel., (It's a very quiet cemetery.) found my grandparents and buried my problem. Very satisfactory solution.**