

May 2021

SURPRISE, SURPRISE, SURPRISE! I looked myself up on Bing for some reason or the other and found that I am permanently closed! Google was a little better, only temporarily closed there. Now whatever am I going to do with all these beautiful plants? Thankfully, Mark (You remember Mark, my computer guru son in WV) was able to sort them out. Not easy.

Oops, just checked. Looks like we are permanently closed again. Very frustrating.

What's with the **POSTCARDS**? Printing and postage for as many newsletters as I send was getting too expensive. If I do a purge of people not heard from in a season, I still have to send them all. Why not email? Stuff gets lost into spam or just missed. I hope this new plan works for you. Now if the Post Office will only deliver in a timely manner...

NOTE: I hate the postcards! May have to do a purge.

We made a new **GREENHOUSE**! Since we had the hoops still up from a former one, all we had to do (Haha.) was make new ends and side pieces, install the pallets and put on the plastic. It's pretty far back from the market so I will either get fit or break down completely. Actually, I love it. Thank you, Andy!

Do we have everything you want? **WE DO!** All the usual herbs and perennials and, of course, some new ones. I think **basil pesto perpetuo** is the best new basil in years. It has great scent and flavor, gets quite large, doesn't rush to bloom and is beautifully **variegated**. All the other basil's are coming on soon.

We have all the usual **CONEFLOWERS** you would expect, plus I brought in one of the newish 'butterfly' series called 'Orange Skipper'. Bring your mortgage.

Each year in the fall I remove most of the **IDENTIFICATION TAGS** from the leftover plants and put many of them by the barn for the winter. Then I put the tags in a safe place. As of yet, I have not found that safe place. I think the repeated snow cover helped the overwintering plants and quite a number look really good. Now if I can just figure out what they are! Herbs are easy, but some of the perennials have me stumped.

Last fall we renovated the little **BUTTERFLY GARDEN** by our falling down shed. I have always edged it with **large clam shells**. The problem is, we expanded it somewhat and I didn't have enough large clam shells. Anyone?

Remember JOHNNY JUMP-UPS? I once again have the newer slightly larger version called 'Penny jump-ups'. They are supposed to self-sow like the original. I also have seed for the original which is 'Helen Mount'. We'll see.

Perhaps this is a good spot for your dreaded BOTANICAL NAME
LESSON: Cochineal refers to scale insects native to Mexico and South America and to the dye carmine, which is made by crushing their little dead bodies to extract the color. It used to be used more widely in food, lipsticks, drinks, etc. and is totally safe, but the 'yuck' factor made it fall out of favor. The name remains, however, and if you see any form of cochineal in a botanical name, it means red. Just one case in point: *centranthus 'coccineus'*, Common name is red valerian which drives me nuts.

I have read that this dye is starting to regain favor in some quarters as a safer alternative to some chemical dyes. There is still a good chance it will be in your ruby red grapefruit juice.

Yes, we still want your POTS AND FLATS. If you are not shopping, just put them somewhere around the bell. Thank you.

REMEMBER, THE LAST SAFE FROST DATE FOR YOUR TENDER ANNUALS AND VEGETABLES IS MAY 15TH.

I will once again this year be a vendor at the BURLINGTON COUNTY FARMERS MARKET on Centerton Road. In case you have forgotten, it is open Saturdays from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM. First day open was May 8. Bring lots of money. We have become hooked on the challah hamburger rolls and I am enamored of the lavender/vanilla/honey ice cream.

I will be making a trip to my NATIVE PLANT supplier in MD. If there is anything you need, within reason, I can probably fit it in for you. Call or email ASAP. Hoping to get swamp milkweed and cardinal flowers, among other things.

Looks like this is supposed to be a BUGGY YEAR. There are those spotted lantern flies again; we will see how they fared the winter. Oddly, although we had hundreds on our ailanthus trees last year, I can't see a single egg mass anywhere. Perhaps all the squashed ones put them off. Later note: found a few egg masses, two on a dead tree and one on a maple tree.

I believe I can guess one reason lantern flies are so many. I guess you know they are not flies or moths, but enormous leaf-hoppers. We are starting to see some of the first in-stars now and they are the cutest bugs you can imagine. They look

like tiny, fat little black beetles with tiny white dots. You just feel bad killing them. They also jump rapidly when threatened.

We are also, of course, expecting the 17-year cicadas. If I recall from the last time, they are only in certain areas. We had very few here. They are fairly amazing when they are numerous. You can find all the info you can possibly want on 'cicada mania' including, believe it or not, some really clever shirts and mugs.

MARK For MAYOR! Yes, Mark (you remember Mark) is running for Mayor in Ronceverte, WV. He is pretty well known, but also possibly still an outsider from the North. Election is in June.

Our GEESE have been giving us loads of trouble. They were so loud all the time, especially at night, that we did find a home for two of them. They have been wanting to wander where they shouldn't and fighting fiercely, but now the two girls are setting (Noooo!) so the boys are sticking close to home and not fighting so much.

We still only have two CHICKENS. Lolita is gorgeous. If there is a poultry show this year and she hasn't been eaten, I might take her.

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.

STATE SONGS As many of you know, I am originally from Maryland. Andy expected me to be upset that 'Maryland, my Maryland' seems to be on its way out. That is actually fine with me. I am a lyrics person. I know many, many lyrics to many, many songs. So the state song goes

"Da dadada, da dadada, Maryland, my Maryland". So very forgettable and, I believe, very violent. Let it go. Get a new one or write new words.

Do you know that New Jersey is the ONLY state without an official state song? West Virginia has three official state songs. Songwriters: Submit your entries.

Perhaps plant suppliers thought THE WORLD IS GOING TO END so I will stop growing all this stuff. I can't find butterfly bushes anywhere; there only seem to be about two colors of phlox and bee balm, also no bleeding hearts of any kind and no amsonias. I am working on propagating what bee balms I have, but there won't be much this year. I have a number of survivors from last year or earlier. I have to wait till they bloom so I know the color.

DRIFT ROSES We are still very happy with our drift roses outside the fence. We looked up pruning them and recommendations wanted us to cut them back to six inches. That is definitely not happening. I want them to bloom in May, not July. I took the hedge clippers a bit to some of the big ones and did some careful pruning and cleaning out to all. They look great!

We have HELLEBORES again! They are such fabulous shade plants. One of mine has been blooming since January, the others since mid-March. Last year they never seemed to stop. We have two colors in stock, nice big plants. Common name is Lenten rose.

I have had it with the OSTRICH FERNS. We potted up some singles which looked good for two weeks then collapsed. They are taking over my shade garden. I am going to pop most of them out and put them in a nearby weedy area where they can live or die as they please. Too bad, they sure are pretty.

Like TULIPS? Check out the Dunkin Donuts at Rt. 38 and Briggs Road. Fabulous display!

Why do we 'RUE THE DAY'? It is the bitterness. Rue is very bitter and is even sometimes used as the bitter herb at Passover seders.

Let's talk about PLANTING SEEDS. It's not always as scary as it sounds. I bought seeds for *rudbeckia triloba* which is, I believe, the self-sowing black-eyed Susan I want. I will quote the seed packet: "Sow 6-7 weeks before last frost. For best results pre-chill for 30 days. Cover seed lightly (to a depth of no more than 1/64") Place seed flats outdoors or in the refrigerator and keep moist for 30 days" And so on and on. I said "That ain't happening."

I filled eight pots with my soil mix, spread the seeds on top, patted them in a bit and put them in the greenhouse. I have at least 20 tiny plants in each pot. Just plant your seeds. Bigger seeds deeper, tiny seeds shallower. Keep moist but not soggy. Just do it.

Need more LAVENDER INFO? We are posting a piece that I put together for the Garden Club when we couldn't meet and didn't know how to zoom. It will be posted under 'apothecary'.

Come see us. Ring the bell.

Gloria and Andy