

SEPTEMBER 2018

Now? A newsletter at the end of September? Absolutely! Let's clear out the market so I don't have to carry all these lovely things to a winter spot. And as I keep telling you:

FALL IS FOR PLANTING!

Plant a perennial flower or herb in the fall and it has all winter to put down roots and come back big in the spring. No scorching sun, no hot drought, no bugs.

Most of our perennials look great with their new post-bloom growth and the herbs have, of course doubled and tripled in size. Even the French tarragon, which has looked terrible all season, is putting out from the base.

What about those AFTER-BLOOM PERENNIALS? If you are not saving seeds or leaving the seed heads for the little birds, coneflower, for example, then your plants will be better if you cut them back to the new growth at the base. They will put their effort into roots instead of making seeds. This does not apply to flowering shrubs which, in general, should be pruned after blooming.

Do you know you could probably live on PUMPKIN PIE? Think about it. All the food groups are there: bread in the crust, pumpkin or squash for vegetables, milk and eggs for protein, and that other life essential, sugar. By the way, don't try to get away without the sugar. Mark bought a sugar free pumpkin pie on sale last year and it was terrible. Tasted like perfume. Not even fit to bring home for the critters.

Do you have a WINTER SAVORY? We are supposed to be especially concerned about the bees, large and small, honey bees and natives. When our big winter savory was in bloom, it was rampant with all kinds of bees, many of which I couldn't even identify. By the way, savory is also very attractive in bloom. It looks like it has been dusted with snow. Cut back to new growth in spring. Do we have it? You bet we do.

BIRDS and BUGS I notice that, particularly in late summer and early fall, the suet that we put out does not go nearly as fast. Since most of our suet customers are woodpeckers, I have concluded that they much prefer the

bugs that are bigger and more plentiful this time of year. We actually aren't even seeing many starlings. We still have enough blue jays and squirrels to make it worth the expense.

BIRDS and CATERPILLARS The possible problem with feeding those bug-eating birds? I have seen very few of my favorite tiger swallowtail butterflies this year. Wait a minute, I say. Birds eat bugs. Caterpillars are bugs. Tiger swallowtail caterpillars eat trees, mostly high up. It seems to me that those lovely birds we feed may be eating our caterpillars. Ungrateful wretches!

We have been up to our eyeballs in **MONARCHS**, even to the point of sharing caterpillars with a friend who didn't have many. I always end up doing the caterpillar rescue. First situation is moving the ones on milkweed infested with those horrible yellow aphids to clean plants (Look carefully on undersides of leaves for the tiny caterpillars) and putting my foot on infested plants. Second is later in season when I move to a better plant with leaves the ones that have eaten their plant to nothing.

Here we go again with the **CHICKENS**. Hate chickens? Skip this article. Our flock looked a bit thin so we expanded it with the purchase (\$\$\$!) of three hens: two buff Brahmas and one Speckled Sussex. Then, being weak, we also brought a silver lace Wyandotte home from the New Jersey State Fair. Do we get lots of eggs now? Nah. But it's still the prettiest flock of birds you will ever see. We aren't sure if we are going to the poultry show in October. I had hoped to take our frizzle rooster but he got his tail ripped out by my neighbor's rooster and it's very slow coming back.

WEEDS (No, not that kind) **Japanese dayflower** can be a take-over kind of plant, but a good stand of them is really eye-catching in bloom. There are not many plants that have that cobalt blue color. They like it wet so this has been a happy year. I usually let a few stands of them grow where I have nothing else going on. Never fear, they are very easy to pull out where you don't want them.

White Snakeroot is one of the more attractive pain-in-the-neck weeds. Growing up to three feet tall, it makes a good filler in bouquets, looking like tall white ageratum and holding up well. I am sorry about Abraham

Lincoln's mother, but I do allow some fairly large areas of snakeroot. Oddly, it almost never grows in the cow pasture.

What? You don't know about Abraham Lincoln's mother? When cows eat snakeroot, it makes their milk poisonous, called 'milk sickness' at the time. Historians have determined that Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother, died from this condition. Normally, cows will not eat snakeroot, but in a bad drought year, which it seems to have been, they become desperately hungry and will eat it. His mother died October 5, 1818, one hundred years ago next week.

This has been a good year for SPIDERS. They seem to be everywhere. Admittedly I am not a great housekeeper (understatement of the year) but I was still amazed to see that a spider has made a web at bottom of my living room steps and caught a cricket! A few nights ago on my way out to the market to feed Cat, I looked up just in time to avoid walking into one of those huge webs with the big spider working on finishing touches. If I hadn't missed it, you would all have heard me screaming. There is a tiny spider with a beautiful tiny web on the same shelf as my cash box. I have rescued two cobweb spiders from sinks. I tolerate them because they catch fruit flies.

I really dislike CAMEL CAVE CRICKETS. Creepy things. And they don't even sing.

HYSSOP is another underused butterfly herb/flower/sub-shrub. We have the one that blooms blue. Hyssop is semi evergreen, which means it pretty much keeps its leaves until new ones in the spring. If, by chance, you hate butterflies, the blooms dry extremely well and hold their color.

Please come and buy my LEMON GRASS! It is enormous and I don't have room in my basement. You can keep it over winter as it is, whack it back, or pull it apart and harvest the stems. My friend Jennifer says they freeze their harvested stems. It is fragile and will not take any frost.

The JAPANESE KNOTWEED 'Crimson Beauty' is going to be spectacular. Just ask and I will cut some for you, but you have to pick the leaves off yourself. Hang to dry and it will keep its color indefinitely.

A few years back we tried to sell Queen of the Prairie, *filipendula rubra*, which I got from my friend Lorna. It is a really wonderful native (plains) perennial with a tall naked stalk of shocking pink bloom. I was having trouble coming up with a bloom description so I consulted the internet. Here is some of what I found: plumes, cloud-like, spray-like, wide panicles and wind-tossed fluff or foam. Its only drawback is that the large leaves look very much like pot. People were actually hesitant about those nosy neighbors peering over the fence. Perhaps with legalization on the horizon I should get seeds and see if I can produce a crop of Queen of the Prairie.

I guess the ALASKA FERN misses Alaska. The tag says to plant 24 inches apart and it will grow 24 to 36 inches tall. Also that fronds are a good filler for arrangements. I just measured ours. It is 7 inches wide by 4 inches tall. Note to Garden club members: I should have read this before our tiny bottle project.

We have one 'Wisteria Lane' BUTTERFLY BUSH left. It has wisteria colored blooms that hang like wisterias. All the look without the two feet of growth every two weeks and butterflies as well. Originally \$20.00, now \$13.00. Call or email to reserve if you don't

want to gamble.

We transplanted a huge RUSSIAN COMFREY from WV and hid it behind some things deer don't eat. It looks fabulous! Also on that note, we put several pots of comfrey in the middle of a large area of variegated vinca vine, which deer do not like. So far, so good.

Perilla works too, except it gets so tall. We have big drifts of perilla here and there.

We went to a GORDON LIGHTFOOT concert in Ocean city in August. One of the DJs at my hometown station got me appreciating him. (Did I ever mention the station? Streaming

at WJEJRadio.com) He can still sing and sounds like himself. Appears a little older. Do you think it could be because he is turning 80 in a few months?

