

*"One touch of Nature
makes the whole world
kin"* Shakespeare



New Garden
Workshops
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Spring 2008

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What's old is new. We often are reminded of the cyclical nature of life, particularly in this business. In light of "What goes around, comes around" our business is a perfect example. Rural residents commonly heated with wood 50 years ago. In the past few years as oil prices spiked and the concern about global warming increased wood is being looked at again. In our case we have gone from heating with oil to heating with a modern chip-fired heating system. This has resulted in reducing our net CO2 emissions from heating to near zero. In the future we will be exploring the growing and processing of our own fuel on our farm.

In the past farmers had to rely on the resources available to them in nature rather than a test-tube. In that case natural enemies of pests were often your only advocates. Planting crops in such a way to avoid the worst of the pests life-cycle and encouraging natural enemies. We have adopted Biological Pest Control as our primary means of controlling pests. The results have been very

favorable and the feeling of working with the millions of "soldiers" in the greenhouses is a very comforting one.

Another of the practices that has become more prevalent is the more careful management of the organic matter in the soil. Our soils have always had a high organic matter content due to the use of peat moss but in the past few years we have added compost into our mixes. The advantage being that we are effectively inoculating our soil with a broad mix of beneficial micro-organisms.

We hope that these

practices have benefits for us and for you in both the short and long term. If you have any questions we are always more than happy to answer them.

*"Nature does have manure
and she does have roots as
well as blossoms,
and you can't hate the
manure and blame the
roots for not being
blossoms."*

- Buckminster Fuller



Last year around June 1 we started getting phone calls about an inundation of bugs in peoples gardens. Brian spent quite a bit of time trying to determine if any damage was being caused by these bugs and hopefully prevent people from spraying unnecessarily. What was discovered were something called **soldier beetles**. They had likely overwintered in the soil and started their season eating larval stages of insects in the soil. They also feed on grasshopper eggs, corn root worms and many other larvae that might be on the lower parts of plants. The adults are excellent predators of aphids so assist greatly in those early aphid infestations. They are attracted to pollen and so you might see lots of them as they emerge with early blooms...be happy if you do!



Peas and Beans, what's the difference? Each year during the first few warm days of spring we get people coming in looking for plants. People coming in offering us money is always a good thing (especially after the long hard winter!) but often the notion of appropriate plants for cold weather (and soil) vs. warm weather (and soil!) is not at the forefront of their thinking.

Plants come in all shapes and sizes and they also have variable requirements when it comes to temperature as well. To get back to the example of peas and beans. The seeds look a bit alike (at least in terms of size). They are both legumes and produce pods with multiple seeds that you harvest to eat (or plant). They must have the same requirements right?...well of course you could see this coming but the answer is no. Peas will readily germinate in cool soil so can be planted as

soon as you can work your garden. They also don't like the heat so if you don't get them planted early enough the heat of the summer will be very hard on them. Beans on the other hand require warm soil to germinate and if you plant them with the peas in April they will simply rot before the soil warms up enough for them to germinate. Even if they do germinate if we get any cold weather they will be decidedly unhappy. If we get frost it will kill them.

A short list of pea type crops both flowers and vegetables are; lettuce, cole crops, petunias, pansies and dianthus.

A short list of bean type crops are; tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, Impatiens, begonias and geraniums.

All the bean type crops will at best sit tight if the soil and air temperatures are not warm enough and at worst rot in the ground.

"And if you voz to see my roziz

As is a boon to all men's noziz, -

You'd fall upon your back and scream -

'O Lawk! O criky! it's a dream!"

- Edward Lear, 1885

"A garden is an awful responsibility. You never know what you may be aiding to grow in it."

- Charles Dudley Warner

New! Garden Workshop Series

Summer droughts, winter thaws, watering restrictions, new pesticide bans all effect how we garden. Multiply your gardening successes with these Saturday afternoon garden workshops, exclusive to Burt's Greenhouses.

May 10 - Spectacular Sunny Dry Hot Gardens

May 17 - Show-Stopping Containers

May 24 - Veggies, Herbs & Flowers – Integrate, Don't Segregate!

May 31 - Designing with Perennials – For New & Established Gardens

June 7 - Less Maintenance – More Impact: Shrubs With Perennials

June 14 - Spectacular Sunny Dry Hot Gardens

June 21 - Creating a Weather-Resilient Garden for the Long Term

Time is from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. at Burt's Greenhouses, Garden specialists **Anne Maxwell** and **Darlene Cullimore** of **Garden Change Consulting** lead the hands-on, questions-welcome sessions. Fee: \$3, payable at Burt's Greenhouses (fees donated to Food Down the Road). All attendees will receive a \$3 credit for plant

purchases. Sign up at the cashier. Space is limited – don't wait to register!

"I find that a real gardener is not [someone] who cultivates flowers; he is [someone] who cultivates the soil. [They are] a creature who digs [themselves] into the earth and leaves the sight of what is on it to us gaping good-for-nothings. [...] He builds his monument in a heap of compost. If he came into the Garden of Eden, he would sniff excitedly and say: 'Good Lord, what humus!'"

Karel Capek, The Gardener's Year, 1931

We are all becoming aware that the food we eat comes a long distance. The trucking and flying of this probably won't be sustainable in the long run. We need to get in the habit of eating more locally grown foods. A simple way to start is to incorporate a few vegetables into you gardens. If you only have flower beds, there is nothing to stop you from choosing some of the ornamental vegetable varieties available for your flower gardens. Swiss Chard comes in a form that

has brightly coloured stems with rich dark green leaves. It can be used as a substitute for spinach and lasts throughout the season. Regular kale is attractive, but also consider Redbor (red/purple frilly leaves) or Dinosaur Kale (bumpy blue green leaves) that are beautiful but also edible. We stole these ideas from the city of Montreal that used a lot of ornamental vegetables to good effect.

"Like a gardener I believe what goes down must come up." -Lynwood L. Giacomini

Hover flies are one of the things may see as you tour your garden. They might remind you of small bees but are in fact flies. They have a very distinctive "hovering" flying pattern much like a hummingbird. Once again these ubiquitous creatures are your friends. They will lay eggs on plants with aphids and the larvae will then eat the aphids. If you want to encourage them you might consider interplanting amongst your garden ajuga, lavender, bergamot, alyssum, dill, or coriander.

Our old fashioned winter has come and gone. If you are ready to feel the sun, the rain, the earth and be overwhelmed with the choice of plants then come to see our greenhouses.



"I have a rock garden. Last week three of them died."
- Richard Diran



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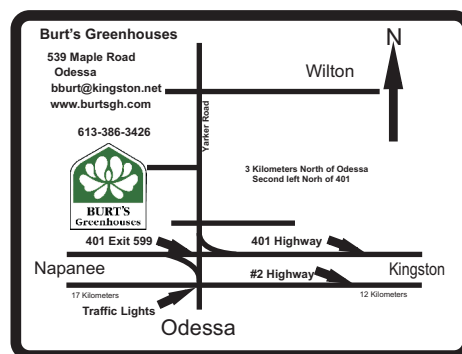
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