



Garden Club News

February 2014

PO Box 3253 Teaneck, NJ 07666

www.gardenclubofteaneck.org

The next meeting of the Garden Club of Teaneck will be held on February 19th at the Richard Rodda Center. The meeting will start at 7:30pm. Our speaker that night will be Ray Edel. Ray will talk to the club about "Preparing Your Garden for spring." See page 4 article for details.

The next meeting of the Greenhouse Committee of the Garden Club will be on Saturday, February 7th at 10:00 am at the Greenhouse.

Member News

Message from Pat Fromm, President

While house-bound with icy roads, take solace with all of those spring seed and plant catalogs! It is indeed time to begin planning your spring gardening.

The next Garden Club meeting welcomes back one of our favorite speakers, Ray Edel with "*Preparing your garden for spring*". Don't miss it! Pat Fromm

Please note the meeting has been rescheduled from February 12th to February 19th, speaker will begin promptly at 7:30 pm at the Rodda Center.

Six of us braved the frigid temps on January 10th to learn about winter pruning at our first workshop of the year.

Gerard Limone, talked to us about various types of tools, and timing for pruning. We actually pruned the unruly Euonymus in front of the greenhouse. Take a look next time you are there! The small group also allowed time for individual problem plants and issues in our own gardens.

Message from Len Schwartz Director of the Greenhouse

We are at the beginning of our 2015 plant sale. On Friday, Jan 30, we brought in about

860 geranium plugs and on Feb 1, the Sunday herb group did us the service of re-potting about a third of them, while the Sunday regulars prepared 300 pots for later use. The re-potting went fast because all of the geranium pots were ready to go. This coming week's group work assignments will be to complete the geranium re-potting and to prepare additional pots for later use. Throughout February our goal is to have most of the pots pre-made so that when the big rush occurs in March, a considerable amount of the work will have already been done. As in the past, the Tuesday group will have full responsibility for the Geranium's TLC. As the plugs of other plants get re-potted different groups will have responsibility for their TLC. We are trying to make the preparation for the 2015 sale smooth, easy and fair so it is now important that we all attend our work sessions.

The greenhouse will be inducting four new members at the Feb. 7 meeting and they will be choosing the four remaining open benches. The new members are Nancy Lichtenstein, Doug Raska, Mark Penchinar and Peter Goldman. We welcome them.

A list will be started at the Feb meeting for anyone who currently has a plot in our outside gardens and who would like to shift

into one of three open plots. A lottery will be held for these plots at the end of the March meeting and then a second lottery will be held for new first timers who want any available remaining plots.

The kitchen remodeling is progressing. The lighting over the seeding trays is being improved. The first usage is for plants intended for the sale. Thanks to our new thermostats the greenhouse is making it through this cold winter with day time temperatures set at 70 degrees. Len.

Message from Joe Papa Horticultural Director

At this time we should be planning our seed selection for the 2015 plantings. I often try new varieties, looking for new challenges with the possibility of uncovering a new mainstay. I have been germinating from seed for over twenty five years and in the past bought plants from the local nurseries as a backup or a fill in. I have always liked the diversity of the seed catalogs and the ability to control my own growing medium.

- **Growing Medium** - The potting soils we use at our Greenhouse is a commercial grade potting medium, Pro Mix BX, used for generally large scale applications composed of peat, perlite and vermiculite. It is great for large propagation as we do for our plant sale. I use this for primarily flower propagation. In terms of edibles I use an organic mix that incorporates compost, worm castings as well as some peat, perlite and vermiculite. The advantages; organic, minimal fertilization, healthier seedlings.
- **Lighting** - I recently upgraded from T-8's to T-5's, fluorescent lighting, they are both quite efficient. Buy a timer for you will be running on a 12 to 14 hour cycle.
- **Heating Mats** - You will need one for many of the plants particularly peppers

and tomatoes.

The initial costs for the hardware will be offset by the cost saving on the seeds over the long run.

There are many plants that can be sowed indoors to get a head start on the season. However, if you have a large garden and limited lighting you will be restricted by your lighting capabilities. Therefore I direct sow varieties such as lettuce, kohlrabi, kale, peas, beans, squash, okra and all root crops. I also have a cold frame which I typically erect mid-March and plant all my cool crops.

That is it in terms of starting from seed; most of what I learned about this process was gleaned from what I consider one of the best publications on the subject, The New Seed Starters Handbook by Nancy Bubel. In addition, Mother Earth Magazine; is a wonderful resource relatively inexpensive and loaded with informative articles. This one is entitled,

“ Best Tips for Starting Seeds Indoors”

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/starting-seeds-indoors-zm0z12djzor.aspx>

Getting Seeds Out of Dormancy - Gibberellic Acid by Anna Kurz

Gibberellic acid (GA) is present in many plants naturally and is also produced by lichens.

Getting seeds out of dormancy is a huge business that lay folks like us do not know much about but is a driving force in the horticultural/agricultural world. Imagine if the wheat or corn or cauliflower seeds a farmer planted did not break dormancy and germinate; a couple of seasons like that and we would all starve.

EPA's regulation of pesticides includes the establishment of limits, called “tolerances,”

on the amount of pesticides that may remain in or on foods marketed in the U.S. Gibberellic acid is exempt from the requirement of a tolerance for residues when it is used as a plant regulator in or on all food commodities, when it is applied to plants, seeds, or cuttings and on food commodities after harvest. It has been exempt from the tolerance requirements since June 1999

Under FDA regulation 21 C FR 172.725, gibberellic acid is allowed for use as a food additive to be used in the malting of barley, provided that it meets the specifications of the regulation regarding purity and production source. Anna

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5097549>

Soil+Water+Attention = HERBS - Patty Libutti

From the UrbanHerban's Notebook:



Getting Them Started in the Greenhouse

- **SOIL:** Culinary herbs that we grow locally are rumored to do well in poor soil. This is a myth; herbs need nutrients to develop flavor and grow the cells that provide aroma and flavor (volatile oils), which comes from soil and sun. The soil in NJ has 17 kinds of soil and we will worry about that when we go outdoors. For germination indoors, we use a sterile medium to give the plant a head start.
- **STARTING FROM SEEDS:** Some prepare a seed flat with soil and a lining of porous paper, such as newspaper, to keep the soil in the flat. Make sure not to dig them into an early grave! Plant a seed in a hole to a depth of 2-3 times the thickness of the seed. (experts vary.) Although the seed will huddle in the dark until it is ready, it will assert itself and break through the soil. Small seeds, such as Basil, Oregano, and Thyme can be placed on top of the soil and gently pressed into the soil, no layer on top. You can cover a seeded flat with plastic and place them away from light to germinate---the plant does not need light until it pushes forth. Then they need to develop that critical chlorophyll to absorb nutrition from the light (photosynthesis).
- **STARTING FROM CUTTINGS:** When propagating Scented Rose Geraniums, use a sharp knife to make the diagonal cut on a tip stem, leaving 2 leaves. Do not enhance it with root hormone; there are chemicals in the cells that promote rooting. When there are two leaves on the stem of any seedling, separate the plantlets and place into small pots. You have a short window on plant health—they may overcrowd, and their root systems will entangle.
- **FERTILIZER:** Another myth is that herbs do not need fertilizer. They will "make it", maybe, but why grow malnourished plants? Since the plants are in an enclosed space rather than outdoors, pay close attention to the dosage used.
- **WATER:** When the plants are on a heated pad, you must watch the water moisture due to dryness; the seeds will dry out. If the plants are in a plastic wrapped flat, over moisture may cause seed rot. Think here of Goldilocks and the porridge that is "just right". Some herbs are moistened by the random splashing of ocean spray. With the name, Rosemary, (ros= "dew", *marinus*= "sea"), one would naturally infer that

Rosemary can do well with only some spritzing and spare watering. Check the nature of the plant you tend.

NOW WHAT? Pay attention to the plant: water, feed, trim and have a good beginning to summer planting. It is not much different when summer comes and these plants are outdoors.

But that is another story. Patty Libutti
urbanherban.blogspot.com

If you want to look at the companies and related articles, go to my blog (urbanherban.blogspot.com).

Ray Edel to Speak to the Garden Club of Teaneck – By Anna Kurz

On Thursday, February 19, the Garden Club of Teaneck will welcome Ray Edel to teach us “How to Prepare Our Garden For Spring” and invites the public to learn. Ray’s lasting interest in gardening and his credentials enable him to give us advice on preparing our plots for a successful growing season.

Ray is a writer for the Record since 1982, many know him as the author of the Record’s gardening column “From the Ground Up”, begun in 2005.

The meeting is Thursday, February 19, 2015 at 7:30 pm, at the Richard Rodda Center in Teaneck.

Herbal Teas – Good For What Ails You – By Patty Libutti

Are you one of those people suffering from a cold in February, 2015? And that means runny nose, sore throat, sneezing, and coughing. You know it is 7-10 days to a normal life no matter what. You can be more comfortable: use herbal teas to sooth the symptoms. Scientists have found that hot liquids radically relieve cold symptoms better than warm or cold liquids. So drink one of many herbal teas to feel better:

Mint Tea: Relief plus: this tastes good. It could be Spearmint (sweeter, milder), or Peppermint (bracing, enervating.) Some 30 + chemicals are defined in Spearmint that affect you. Catnip is also an herb of note.

Echinacea: Tea is made from the roots--- and the juice is used for prevention. The tea is called, as are all of these herbal concoctions, a tisane (pronounced (ti-SAYN), meaning tea made of material other than black tea, usually without caffeine. Echinacea has been tested for efficacy by the NIH and found to be “moderately effective. What does that mean? It is better than “not effective.”

Try another root tea: **ginger**. Slice and pour hot water over it and steep. It has a hot, sharp taste, and is good with honey. You can try teas made from many **culinary herbs** that were once considered medicine: Rosemary, Sage, even Basil are held to have medicinal properties for colds. “Officinalis” in their botanical names means “used as medicine or in herbalism”.

If using **Native American herbs** is your interest, try You might also try Elderberry, Rose hips, or Goldenseal. Sample Mountain mint---and be prepared for a very strong taste, hopefully, so strong that you will forget about your cold. You will find it in the Midwest and Virginia, as well as in Anna Kurtz’s garden. Mountain mint is not of the *Mentha* family, as are Spearmint and Peppermint, but one can swear by its similar scent.

Final Word

It is with great sorrow that I report the passing of long time Garden Club of Teaneck member Mary Topolsky. I will always remember her as a kind and gentle soul.

Please everyone drive safe and stay warm.
Marty Steeil