



Garden Club News

March 2012

PO Box 3253 Teaneck, NJ 07666

www.gardenclubofteaneck.org

Calendar: March 2012

The Garden Club of Teaneck will meet on Thursday, March 8th at 7:00 pm. The meeting will be held at the Rodda Center at 250 Colonial Court. Our guest speaker that evening will be Len Schwartz.

The next Greenhouse Committee meeting will be held at the Greenhouse on Saturday, March 3rd at 10:00 am.

Member News

Message from Debbie Morgan, President

I am very happy to say that we are only a few weeks away from spring and it has been a mild and beautiful winter. By the time you get this some of us will have returned from the trip to the Philadelphia Flower Show where we would have had a fabulous time. We'll talk about it at our monthly meeting. Meanwhile the Greenhouse Committee is getting quite busy preparing for the annual spring sale. Don't forget to plan on buying early as the sale this year is for one week and 2 weekends only. Also pay close attention to the township green at the town hall. Most of the plants and the design are by way of the greenhouse and our horticultural director, Christina. In fact, we should take lots of pride in what we do. What is more rewarding than beautifying our town? I am looking forward to seeing everyone on the 8th. Yours in Gardening, Debbi

Message from Len Schwartz, Greenhouse Director

The Greenhouse Committee has been working on many activities.

Plant Sale

The Annuals for the Spring Plant Sale will be arriving soon.

Municipal Green

Christina has met with the town committee in charge of the planting the Green. We are still responsible for producing about 40 flats of annuals, mostly begonias and salvia.

Elections

We will be electing greenhouse committee officers in June to new two year terms. Carol Doltch will be forming a nominating committee. Please serve on it. Our officer positions are Director, First Assistant Director, Second Assistant Director –Horticultural, Treasurer, Secretary, and Assistant Treasurer. Nominations will be made at the April meeting.

Outside Gardens Rules Changes

On Feb. 22, a meeting was held at the greenhouse to consider changes to the rules governing our outside garden plots. We need to improve our standards but the immediate concern is how to fairly allocate open plots to those who might like to change their location and also how to fairly allocate plots to new members. The new rules will be presented for approval by the entire Greenhouse Committee

at the March 3rd meeting. After the meeting all outstanding garden plot assignments will be resolved. The proposed new rules are posted in the Greenhouse. Len

Message from Christina Mackensen, Greenhouse Horticultural Director

We have had spring-like weather for several weeks now and many of us are getting itchy to start working in the garden. It is not too early to get outside.

For a starter, we can groom and get our tools ready for the new growing season. Pruners and shears can be sharpened on a sharpening stone, and spades and trowels with a mill file. Finishing off the tools with some oil will prevent rust and corrosion.



Another activity that can be done is cleaning up fall and winter debris. The lawn should be raked, the thatch removed and then aerated. Once the grass starts growing, it should be fertilized. Perennial beds can be cleaned up from wind-blown leaves, and foliage and flower stalks from last year's season removed.



Early spring is also an ideal time to start new plants by dividing perennials. Once hostas, daylilies or Shasta daisies start growing, they can be divided and planted in different areas or shared with fellow gardeners. Finally, the soil

can be improved with a 10-10-10 fertilizer and the old mulch be replaced.

In the greenhouse, the transplanted plugs are growing nicely. Geraniums, pansies, petunias and gazanias have been growing for several weeks now. A few seeds of nasturtiums got a head start already. In a few weeks, the main order of annuals will be picked up from the Dutch growers and a week later, impatiens will follow. It is important that every greenhouse member will help with this enormous task of transplanting the plugs. My thanks to everyone in advance for doing their share. Have a sunny month of March. Until next time, Christina.

Message from Pat Taaffe, VP of Programs

The March Garden Club Meeting will have Len Schwartz, do a presentation on Bonsai Plants. Len is a member of the National Bonsai Organization and has been working with Bonsai plants for over 10 years. I am sure Lenny will have an interesting presentation.

Reminder: The April Meeting on Violets will be held at the Rodda Center. The original plan was to have the meeting at the Greenhouse, but we may have a large crowd which the greenhouse would not be able to accommodate.

Update on Native Plants Seminars: The group has now grown to about 20 and will meet again on March 15th.

Plans for summer workshops are being organized and many fun activities around the greenhouse and in the gardens are in the works. If any member has an idea for an activity they are always welcome to contact me by email at programstgc@gmail.com

Teaneck GreenFest

By Nancy Cochrane

The Garden Club/Greenhouse Committee, the Teaneck Shade Tree Advisory Board and the Teaneck Sustainability Advisory Committee,

will be sponsoring Teaneck's 1st GreenFest. It will be held on Sunday, April 29th from 2-4pm at the Greenhouse. Activities will include recycling information, going green information, arts & crafts for children, a flower planting activity for children, and the planting of a vegetable garden to benefit the Helping Hands Food Pantry. The GreenFest will also include Teaneck's Annual Arbor Day ceremony. There will be free tree seedlings and the opportunity to win a yellow Teaneck Recycling container. The Greenhouse will be open to the public. Other events are still being planned. If anyone would like to help, or have any other suggestions, please contact Nancy Cochrane at teaneckgreenfest@yahoo.com or 201-837-6519. We will need at least 6 volunteers from the Garden Club/Greenhouse Committee. All are welcome to attend.

Tomatoes, Tomatoes -By Joe Papa History

The Tomato evolved in the Andean Region now encompassed by Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Columbia and Peru. The wild tomato species are tiny cherry tomatoes not exceeding one inch in diameter. Domestication occurred in prehistoric times and there are many who believe that the first domestication and cultivation occurred with the peoples of Mexico. Fruit size increased most likely through mutations associated by larger fruit and human selection. It is thought that the Spaniards were the first to introduce the tomato into Europe after their conquest of the Aztec empire around 1519. The first European records are attributed to the Italian herbalist Matthioli in 1544; he described the fruit as the size of his fist and a bright yellow color and called it Pomo di oro Golden apple. It was cultivated in Germany in 1554, Holland, France in 1557, and England in 1597. By 1700, it had circumvented the world, in less than 200 years.

The tomato is the world's most popular fruit (botanically speaking). 60 Million tons are produced annually worldwide, with \$5 billion

in annual sales in the United States. There are now over 10,000 varieties that have evolved. There are two types of tomatoes, indeterminate the natural cultivars grow to 8 to 10 feet to first frost and the determinate or bush, developed for commercial growers, which sets fruit and ripens all at the same time.

Hybrids vs. Heirloom

Hybrids were selectively developed for various disease resistant traits, yields, cracking resistance and primarily for commercial production.

Before the development of the first hybrid in 1946 Heirloom tomatoes were the staple for commercial growers. Most of these cultivars require open pollination and farmers and growers could easily obtain seed from the fruits for the next generation. These are unusual fruit, generally fragile, prone to cracking and disease but unique in color size and taste. Most of the plants that you purchase in the nursery today are hybridized, however, there has been a renewed interest in heirlooms and many can be purchased as plants.

Heirlooms

I became intrigued with Heirlooms about 20 years ago and have grown over 50 varieties. They are fragile, and often not the most uniform but they are unique in taste, texture and color. Each has its own history many dating back to Pennsylvania Dutch immigrants in the early 18th century. Tomatogrowers.com is my favorite seed source and noted for their Heirloom collection.

Growing Tomatoes from Seed

My preference is to grow my tomatoes from seed. Catalogs arrive after Christmas and I look at my records from previous years, take inventory of my existing seed stocks and determine new selections for the upcoming spring plantings. I order my seeds early and have them on hand by February 15th.

The vernal equinox is my clue to start preparation. What you need is seed starting kits; my preference is Parks system, which has a plug system that is very good for root development. A heat mat, a grow light, I use a 48" fluorescent shop lamp, and 5000 Kelvin bulbs. I start my seeds 6- 8 weeks prior to planting, generally around the first week in April for planting in the ground at or around May 20 or when the night time temperatures are at a constant 50 degrees. I put three seeds in each cylinder/ plug. Germination is usually within a week. When the seedlings develop their true leaves I cull to the strongest. Do not over water and always water from the bottom. After two weeks I transplant the seedlings into 3 or 4-inch peat pots using an organic potting mix. I start to fertilize with a 10-1 dilution rate with organic fish emulsion. In the fifth week, I usually let the pots dry for a few days which promotes root growth. I start to harden off my tomato plants by putting them outside one week before planting. The first day is in dapple shade and as the week progresses they are given more exposure to the sun. Be careful because evaporation is rapid in full sun.

Planting Outdoors

Look for a cloudy day or forecast for light rains, if not plant in late afternoon. Plant your tomatoes in well-developed loam soil, on at least three feet on center, which promotes good air circulation and easy access. Plant your tomatoes so that the root ball is 6-8 inches below the surface. I add to the soil at planting time one scoop of granulated chicken manure: 1-8-5 and two scoops of Bone meal 4-15-0 which is high in phosphorous for root formation, stem growth and fruiting. Finally I add in one full shovel full of dehydrated cow manure. Water but do not flood. I use rebar cages to contain the plants, black tarp ground cover, and salt hay or grass clippings to control weeds and maintain relative humidity. Weeds and grasses should always be removed in that they host insects and disease. Be careful when cultivating around your plants. Tomatoes have

a shallow root system. Water when the soil is dry or the plants start to droop. Water at root level. Remember tomatoes do not like wet feet and top watering promotes fungal disease. Water in the early morning and water consistently. I feed with fish emulsion 5-1-1 or Compost tea, every four weeks.

Pollination

Tomatoes self-pollinate. They have both male and female flowers. Good spacing allows airflow and promotes pollination but if fruit is not setting, I like shaking the plants slightly.

Tomatoes Diseases

The most common problems with tomatoes are fungal. Most prevalent in this area is Septoria. Garden's Alive has great illustrations of the various fungal infestations. Symptoms start as yellow dots and spread up the leaves and stems. If your plants show symptoms, cut with a scissor and after each cutting, immerse in rubbing alcohol. Do not put into the compost pile. Dispose of in plastic bags and put in the dumpster. I never compost my tomato plants. I generally do not prune unless I have disease I have to control, or need to improve air circulation. In order for the fruit to ripen without sun scalding, abundant foliage should remain.

Tomato Pests

Flea beetles are early in the season pests, and later on aphids. You can control these pests with insecticide soap. Tomato Hornworm – beautifully camouflaged caterpillar, which can reach 4' in length can be hand picked off the plants.

Production

Most indeterminate heirlooms and certain varieties of hybrids start producing in 80 days. The longer the maturity of the tomato plant the higher the sugar content will be. Determinate tomato plants have a quick fruit set and earlier maturity but are not as succulent and sweet (lack of sugar).