

From: Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>
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Edition 11.03	Paul Parent Garden Club News	January 20, 2011
	<p align="center">FEATURED QUOTE:</p> <p align="center">"Bread and butter, devoid of charm in the drawing room, is ambrosia eaten under a tree." Elizabeth Von Arnim</p>	<p align="center">Gifts for the Gardener</p> <p>Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p>
<p align="center"></p> <h2 align="center">Espoma Organic Potting Mix</h2> <p>Contains Myco-tone®, a proprietary blend of 11 different strains of mycorrhizae, which have been proven to promote root growth, increase water uptake, and reduce drought stress and transplant shock.</p> <p>All natural and organic, premium quality blend. For all indoor and outdoor potted plants.</p> <p align="center"></p>		<p align="center">Contact Information:</p> <p>E-Mail: Click to contact us.</p> <p>Telephone: (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p>Fax: (207) 985-6972</p> <p>Address: Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p>Phone Hours: Monday-Saturday 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p>
<p>If you're looking for a small-growing colorful foliage plant for your home this winter look no further than the "Moses in the Bulrushes." The foliage is in the shape of a sword that will grow about 12 inches long and 2 to 3 inches wide; the tip of the leaf will come to a point. The top side of the leaf will have bands of white and green stripes running the entire length of the leaf. These bands of color will differ on each leaf; some will have more green while others have more white bands on them and the width of these bands will also differ. The underside of the leaf is also colorful with shades of purplish-red; this color will differ depending on the light in your home.</p> <p>This plant loves a room that is bright but not sunny. It will tolerate morning sun but not the hot midday sun, as it will bleach the color of the foliage and the plant will lose its character. If kept in a north facing window, it will do fine also. Keep the plant in a room with temperatures above 64 degrees during the winter. It can go outside during the summer, if placed in a shady spot on your deck or porch. When you put the plant outside for the summer, do not place the plant in a saucer, because heavy rains or over-watering could rot the roots.</p> <p>The plant will do best with high humidity, so keep plants out of rooms that have a wood or coal burning stove in them. If you have forced hot air heat, keep plants away from heat vents. When you water the plant, use warm water only as cold water could spot the foliage as it does too many other houseplants. Misting will help if your home is hot and dry. Keep the plants moist most of the time, but during the winter months keep them a bit on the dry side.</p> <p>Fertilize spring to fall with Miracle-Gro fertilizer every couple of weeks or use Osmocote fertilizer pellets, and the plant will be fed every time you water it. Fertilizer is not necessary during the winter months but I feed mine monthly like I do the rest of my houseplants. A well-fed plant has more colorful foliage.</p> <p>The plants will look like and grow like a Dracaena spike if you remove the side shoots that develop at the base of the plant. I prefer the side shoots on the plants, as it give the look of a multi-stem plant, almost like a clump of foliage. If you remove these side shoots from the plant you can start new plants easily and this is best done during the spring, as the plant is more actively growing with the longer days.</p> <p>Now, the name "Moses in the Bulrushes" comes from the small boat-shaped or pocket-shaped bracts that develop deep down in the axils of the leaf where it meets the central stem. This is very unique in nature, and this boat-shaped growth contains the flowers of the plant. Think back to your poinsettia, as the colorful leaves on that plant are also called flower bracts. The actual flowers are the tiny yellow button shaped flowers on the tip of the plant, not the colorful leaves. This boat-</p>		<p align="center">Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</p> <p>Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</p> <p align="center">A Customized Gardening Tour of Ireland</p> <p>Join us for a journey to the beautiful gardens of the Emerald Isle.</p> <p>Click here for more information.</p>
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shaped growth called the bracts contains the delicate white tongue-shaped flowers.

These bracts will have the same purplish-red color of the underside of the leaves, and as the boat-shaped bract matures, the top will open up, revealing the flowers. The plant flowers from June to August but unless you look closely, you will not notice the flowers on the plant. With the many leaves on the plant it does look like the bulrushes growing in wet areas. The boat-shaped bracts represent the basket that baby Moses was put into to hide him from the Egyptian soldiers.

If you are going to repot the plant or divide the plant, the spring is the best time . Be sure to use a good potting soil with a lot of organic matter in it. When you divide the plant, use a sharp knife to cut shoots from each other rather than pulling the plant apart. Once potted, the plant should be kept in a shaded spot for a few days to allow it time to adjust to the division. Also fertilize and water the new soil well to force all air pockets out of the pot and help settle the new soil in the pot.

The plant is easy to grow and will survive and thrive in most homes with minimal care, and is a good houseplant for a new gardener. The name is easy to remember because it was given to it after a story from the Bible. Enjoy.

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This spring, if you're looking to try a fun project in your back yard please consider growing grapes. Grapes for fresh fruit, desserts, homemade juice or maybe if you're adventurous, even make your own home-made wine. Grapes will grow well in most gardens, and with a bit of help from your local garden center or nursery to select varieties that will be hardy in your area, you're on your way. Here are a few things to consider if you want to grow grapes in your garden.

First of all, grapes are pollinated by the wind, not bees, and most varieties are self-fertile, which means that you are more likely to have fruit no matter what the weather is like. Like other fruits, the crop will be better if you plant at least two plants in the same area.

Grapes are available in the spring as a potted plant and actively growing from your local nursery. Or you can buy plants bareroot (no soil around the roots) from catalog companies and they will ship them to you in the mail while the plants are dormant in the early spring. If you buy plants from a catalog company, make sure plants are for your growing area--and once you receive them they must be potted or planted immediately, or the roots will dry out and you will lose the plants.

If you have a choice, always select varieties that are seedless. These plants are kid-friendly and it's easier to process the fruit for juices, fresh fruit, and desserts. Go on the internet and look up fruit and berry catalogs to get more information on variety choices, taste, uses, and hardiness for your area.

Now let's look at the soil in your yard and see if it will grow grapes. The roots of the grapes grow deep and wide in the soil and are able to thrive in most soils. The exception is heavy clay types that hold a lot of water and hold that water for a long time. Soils that are well drained, sandy, and stony or dry out quickly will grow grapes, as long as you can provide water during the heat of summer. The best soil is one that is well drained and fertile; if your soil is not, you can condition your soil before planting this spring to help the plant grow better.

Dig a big hole 2 feet deep and 2 feet wide and fill with conditioned soil to help get the plant off to a good start. Once the plant gets established in the prepared soil it will adapt to the soil around the plant easily. Grapes grow best in a soil with a PH of 6.0 to 7.5 so adding lime around the planting bed yearly will help the plant to perform better. It will take 2 to 3 years for the grapes to really produce, so be patient, as they can last for 25 years or more in your garden.

Several years ago I was in France and our group did visit a vineyard. To our surprise, the entire vineyard was covered with 2 inches of stone as mulch. The stone mulch kept weeds out but it started the plant growing 2 weeks earlier in the spring for a head start on the season and extended the fruit-ripening season by 2 to 3 weeks in the fall for sweeter tasting fruit. The results were a better tasting wine--and they could sell the wine for more money. Better profit with the crop. If you live where the season is short, you may want to try this on your plants after you plant them this spring or on established plants in the garden.

The location to grow grapes has to be **full sun**; stay away from areas that set low on your property, as they may be frost pockets. Location should have good air movement but away from strong windy areas. Keep grape plants away from areas where you have in-ground irrigation, as constant irrigation on the foliage **will** cause disease problems and encourage insects on the plant.

Watering is important; grapes newly planted or grown against a wall will need regular watering during the spring and summer. Grapes grown on wire trellis or arbors, as well as those grown in the open areas, will require less water. Grapes need regular feedings in the spring, but do not get carried away or the plants will grow too rampant and you will have just vines. In the spring, check plants often to make sure birds do not make nests in vines or they will eat your fruit when the grapes are ripe. I did not do this when my grapes got established and one year the birds ate the grapes, not me!

Now get yourself a good fruit and berry garden book that will explain how and when to prune the grape vine. The pruning will depend on how you grow them, on what type of device such as an arbor, fence , or on wire support and the type of grape you chose to grow for fruit, cooking, juice, or homemade wine. Like anything else it will take some work and time but is well worth the effort on your part. Insect and disease problems are minimal if you follow these rules. Read the fruit and berry book now before you plant in the spring so you know what you are going to experience. Have Fun!

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Let's begin by checking our house plants for hitchhikers. Such insects as aphids, whitefly, mealy bug, scale, and spider mites will begin to multiply with the increase of the length of the day and the heat from the house now.

Look on the tip of the plant first, as insects love new growth to feed on rather than the tough older growth. Insects on the new growth will be easy to spot, as they will make the new growth twist and become misshapen. Now, aphids are the most common problem and their skin color will be the same as the plant--great camouflage ability. You may also find them all clustered together on the tip, especially flowering plants like hibiscus and gardenias.

If plants are on a table, feel the table for a sticky feeling on the surface, or large houseplants will have a sticky floor under the plant. If you find this, clean the surface quickly or the sticky substance on the surface called "honeydew" will grow a black sooty mold that can stain carpeting and hurt wood floors. If this is the case, look on the stems of the plant for small bumps on the stem; these are scale insects, and you can usually rub them off with a soft soapy wet cloth.

If you should notice a type of webbing on the top of the plant you have spider mites. This is the toughest insect to control, so be sure to check other plants near it for possible infection. Any plant with mites should be quarantined from your other plants! Now, wash the plant with warm soapy water and soft cloth to remove webbing and as many adults as possible from the plant.

If you brush against the plant and small white flies fly from the underside of the foliage, you have white fly, an insect that can fly from plant to plant and room to room to slowly destroy your plant collection. If the day is nice, take the plant outside or in the garage briefly and try to knock off as many of the flying insects as possible. Anything that comes off will die from the cold and will not be able to continue to lay eggs on your other plants.

If you see what looks like pieces of cotton on the leaves or stems of the plant, you have an insect called mealy bug. This insect is not as common, but thrives where plants are clustered together or when you mist plants often to increase humidity around plants. If you see some on top of the plant look under the leaves and usually they will be covered. Wash off as many as possible with a soft, wet, and soapy cloth.

There is one more I forgot to mention and this one can be a real problem also. This insect is called a fungus gnat and resembles a small fruit fly, like the ones that come when you keep bananas too long on your kitchen counter. The only product that would control this insect used to be Diazinon, but it was removed from the chemical shelf several years ago. Good news--today there is a new product, just released for indoor use, from Bonide Lawn and Garden, called Bonide Eight Houseplant Insect Spray or Bonide Systemic House Plant Spray. You will have to ask your favorite garden center to order it for you if they do not carry it yet. Tell them I, Paul Parent, want them to order it for you because it is the only product that you can use indoors safely for certain insects.

After you have washed the plant with soapy water, spray all plants with Bonide All Season Oil. All Season Oil can safely be used on herbs as well as all other house plants in your home. I love All Season Oil because there are no toxic fumes for you to breathe with all the windows closed at this time of the year. This oil spray is better than all the other indoor sprays on the market today because it will kill the adults, young and eggs of the insect at the same time. Most other houseplant sprays only kill the adults; some kill the young but this product also kills the eggs of the insects before they get a chance to hatch and create new problems later.

Insects are killed by suffocation as the oil plugs up all the insect's pores and they cannot breathe--there are no chemicals in this plant spray. Because the insects are suffocated, the insects cannot build up immunity to the product like they can to chemical poisons.

The oil spray will also shine up your foliage, making your plants look bright and clean. When you apply the All Season Oil spray, apply to the underside of the foliage first and the stems of the plant. Be sure to turn the plant upside down for the best coverage as insects are more numerous on the underside of foliage and in the crotches of the leaves and stems. Spray the top of the foliage last and repeat in seven days. When spraying herbs, rinse foliage with warm water before eating and the product will wash off easily. Sunshine will destroy the oil product in just 7 to 10 days, but the bugs are now dead. It's time for a quick battle now to avoid war later. Don't wait--check your plants today!

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Join Paul Parent for a garden tour of the Emerald Isle! Only a few seats available before the price increases due to Airline fuel charges that take effect on February 1, 2011. Also, we are looking for a single female to share a room with a fellow female traveler and save over \$400.00 as roommate.

Tour includes the Cliffs of Moher, Connemara National Park, Brigit's Garden, Muckross Gardens, Bantry House & Gardens, Kilravock Garden, Garnish Island, Annes Grove Garden, Lakemount Gardens, Waterford Crystal Visitor Centre, Heywood Gardens, Powerscourt Gardens, Dublin Castle, Dillon Gardens and much more.

[Click here for details.](#)



Are you looking for a great gift for a gardener (or yourself)? This garden journal helps make planning and organizing easy. This journal, *autographed personally by Paul*, makes a perfect gift for gardeners. The cover holds a 5x7 or 4x6 photo and a heavy-duty D-ring binder.

Also included:

- 8 tabbed sections
- 5 garden details sections with pockets for seeds, tags...
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- 6 three year journal pages
- Insect & diseases page - 3 project pages
- 3 annual checklist pages
- Plant wish list page
- 2 large pocket pages
- Sheet of garden labels
- 5 garden detail sheets
- 5 graph paper pages for layouts
- 5 photo pages, each holding four 4x6 photos in landscape or portrait format

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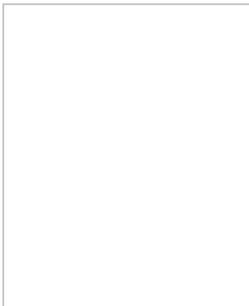


This Week's Question:

The heaviest seed in the world comes from a plant called...? (Botanical name, please.)

[Click Here to Answer](#)

This Week's Prize: *Healthy Garden, Healthy You*, by Milo Shammass



Milo takes us through a storytelling journey of soil health, plant health, animal health and how they directly relate to human health.

BONUS: 100 easy-to-grow plants, their growing instructions, and their direct human health benefits and disease prevention properties.



Last Week's Question:

What is the state flower of New Hampshire?

Last Week's Winner:

Sue Jean

Last Week's Answer:

The purple lilac was designated the state flower of NH in 1919.

Last Week's Prize:

Healthy Garden, Healthy You, by Milo Shammass

One winner per question - we choose winners from the list of those who answer correctly. Winners must be newsletter subscribers. We'll ship you your prize, so be sure to put your address in the form in case you win!

FEATURED RECIPE:

Winter Minestrone



What You'll Need:

- 1/3 pound sliced pancetta, chopped
- 3 medium red onions, chopped
- 4 celery ribs, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 bunch Swiss chard
- 6 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes in juice
- 3 quart hot water
- 5 cups coarsely chopped cored Savoy cabbage (6 ounces)
- 5 cups coarsely chopped escarole (1/2 pound)
- 1 piece Parmigiano-Reggiano rind (about 3 by 1 1/2 inches)
- 1 (19-ounce) can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained

- *Accompaniments:* extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling; cooked Ditalini pasta tossed with oil (optional), or grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Step by Step:

- Cook pancetta, onions, celery, and carrots in oil in a wide 7-to 9-quart heavy pot over medium heat, stirring occasionally, while preparing chard.
- Cut out stems from chard and chop stems, reserving leaves.
- Stir chard stems into pancetta mixture with garlic, 1 teaspoon salt, and 3/4 teaspoon pepper and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are very tender and begin to stick to bottom of pot, about 45 minutes total. (Set aside chard leaves.)
- Push vegetables to one side of pot. Add tomato paste to cleared area and cook, stirring constantly, until it starts to caramelize, about 2 minutes.
- Stir paste into vegetables and cook, stirring, 2 minutes. (Paste may stick to pot, but don't let it burn.)
- Stir in tomatoes with their juice, breaking them up with a spoon, then add hot water (3 quarts), scraping up any brown bits from bottom of pot.
- Bring to a simmer. Stir in cabbage, escarole, and parmesan rind. Simmer, covered, until greens are tender, about 40 minutes.
- Coarsely chop chard leaves and stir into soup along with beans.
- Simmer, partially covered, 10 minutes. Discard rind.
- Season soup with salt and pepper. If using Ditalini, stir in just before serving.

Yield: 8 servings



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