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Edition 11.08	Paul Parent Garden Club News	February 24, 2011
	<p style="text-align: center;">FEATURED QUOTE :</p> <p>"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves." ~Mohandas K. Gandhi</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Gifts for the Gardener</p> <p>Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><input type="text"/></p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Wild Delight® Bird Food</h2> <h3>Not All Bird Foods Are Created Equal</h3> <p>Wild Delight® produces more of what birds crave! All Wild Delight® products contain only the finest ingredients and the best flavors and nutrition you can feed your outdoor pets.</p> <p>Wild Delight® produces three varieties of food to attract the most desirable outdoor pets. Advanced Formulas™ have premium ingredients and complete vitamin-mineral fortification, including real fruits and nuts. Natural Formulas contain only natural premium ingredients. Wildlife Formulas are specifically designed for backyard wildlife.</p> <p>Click here to find out more about Wild Delight® products.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="text"/></p>		<p style="text-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 to grow the most luscious of all the berries that can be grown in your backyard garden, look no further than the strawberry. When ripe and freshly picked from your garden, there is no better tasting berry for its sweet flavor than this easy to grow plant--the strawberry. Like any other fruit or berry, the picking season is short, so be sure to save room in your freezer for those cold days of winter when you crave a sweet treat.</p> <p>Strawberries will grow best in full sun in an area that is sheltered from harsh winds. The plants will still grow if they are in partial shade for a few hours but the production of fruit will be less. Avoid planting in low spots in your yard, like the bottom of a hill, to prevent frost pocket problems early in the season. One other tip--do not plant in the same area where you recently grew potatoes or tomatoes in the last 3 years; it will work against you.</p> <p>Strawberries are not picky about the soil they grow in, as long as it is well drained. Wet soil during the spring can and will rot the roots of the plants. Wet spots that freeze during the winter, forming ice, will kill the plants over the winter. Soil preparation is the key to great strawberries. If you prepare the planting bed ahead of time, you will save a lot of problems later. Add plenty of organic matter like peat moss, composted or dehydrated animal manure, or rich compost to the garden and blend it 6 to 10 inches deep. If your soil is heavy with clay, add coarse sharp sand, like what is used to build the base of a brick walkway.</p> <p>I also suggest using a product like garden gypsum to help break up clay soils and apply garden lime to the soil as needed to keep the soil almost neutral--a pH of 6 to 6.5 is best. Remember the plants will be there for 3 to 4 years, so do it right the first time. Another tip for you is to plant strawberries in a raised bed. All you have to do is dig out the soil from the walkways 2 to 3 inches deep and add to the planting bed. If you get a lot of rain in the spring, the extra water will have someplace to go and not hurt the roots of the plant.</p> <p>Strawberries can be planted two ways in the garden: as staggered rows that are allowed to fill in the entire planting bed or as evenly spaced plants to be grown as individual plants. Staggered rows that fill in the planting bed will give you more fruit, but in time the berries will get smaller because of competition with other plants. Plants grown on individual mounds will have much larger fruit but fewer berries. Each average strawberry plant should produce one half to one pound of berries per plant for the three years they are in your garden.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</p> <p>Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Have a Look Around Our Website:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div> <p>Subscribe to our newsletter!</p> <p>Click here to subscribe, unsubscribe or change your address.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="text"/></p>

Spacing is 15 to 18 inches in between plants, 3 to 4 plants wide per planting bed; this will make it easier to harvest berries later. When you plant your strawberries, be sure to set plants in the ground at the same depth in the garden that they originally grew in the pot. Look for a green ring around the short stem of the plant and just barely cover it with soil. Spread the roots out in the garden soil to help them develop more easily, and make sure the leaves are not covered with soil.

I also like to spread straw on the ground around the plants to help choke out weeds, prevent slugs and snail problems and--best of all--keep the berries off the ground and clear of the soil. Place the straw around the plants and be sure to lift all foliage and berries off the soil; this will give you better air circulation and help prevent berry rot. Use barley or wheat straw--NEVER hay--and weeds will never be a problem.

New plants should be watered regularly until established, and during hot and dry growing periods. When the berries are ripening, keep water off them to prevent gray mold and other disease--water the soil, not the fruit. The best time to water is in the morning, so excess moisture can evaporate quickly off the berries with the morning sunshine. NEVER water strawberries late in the day or at night or you will have moldy berries.

Fertilize in the early spring as the foliage begins to develop and the flowers form. Use organic fertilizers, as they feed slowly and last longer in the soil. Mycorrhizae added to the planting beds will produce stronger and more productive plants. If your soils are sandy be sure to add a pinch of Soil Moist Granules to the planting hole when you set the plants in the garden.

Your biggest problem will be BIRDS because they, like you, love strawberries. Just cover the berry plants with plastic netting at the first sign of the berries ripening and make sure the netting is raised above the plants so the birds cannot poke through the holes in the netting. Pick early in the day and pick often to keep them from eating your berries.

One last thing: strawberries come as June-bearing plants or ever-bearing plants. June-bearing plants produce all at once, usually in 3 to 4 weeks, while ever-bearing plants produce for a much longer period of 6 to 8 weeks. Both produce about the same amount of berries overall; it depends on how fast you want them for your table. Enjoy! Enjoy!

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Most of us think that the spring season is the most beautiful time of the year because of all the trees that come into bloom. It could be, but there are so many tree types in bloom at the same time, we rarely get a chance to enjoy them as individual plants. This is why I enjoy summer-flowering trees more than spring-flowering types. One of my favorite summer flowering trees is called the Stewartia. It's not only the flowers that will excite you. So let me tell you about this wonderful tree and how it will bring excitement to your spring garden that will last even into the winter season.

Once you see this tree in a garden, you will become a believer and you will have to get one for your garden too. In the spring, the foliage will emerge as a bronzy purple leaf, without much fanfare, and quickly grow 2 to 4 inches long. As it matures, it will change color to a medium green. It has oval leaves, with serrated margin-like small teeth along the edge; these leaves will cover the tree. Not much to get excited about...yet.

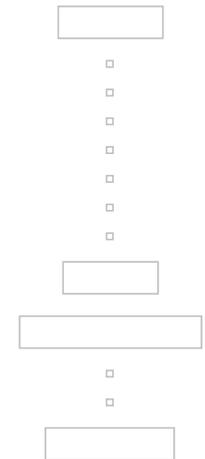
In July, when the spring flowering trees are exhausted and resting with a covering of green leaves, the Stewartia will make its move and the excitement will begin! The flower buds will open and the tree will display hundreds of five-petal flowers, 2 to 3 inches in diameter, scattered all over the tree-like your Christmas tree all decorated. The flowers, have rounded petals on its tips, the color is powdery pure white and the center is filled with a mass of golden-orange anthers. The flowers have a bit of fragrance to them and the bloom will last for 4 to 5 weeks on the plant. The flower petals shatter and fall to the ground, covering the ground like a blanket of fresh fallen snow for a few days.

A fruit with 5 segments that make a pod will form in August, then break open revealing brown seeds. In the fall, the foliage turns bright orange-red to bronze-red on the tree, lasting for several weeks.

Oh--I forgot to tell you about the bark, yes...the bark. The bark is exquisite and that alone will excite you, so let me tell you about it. When young it is a drab gray color until the tree grows to 2 to 3 inches in diameter. All of a sudden, the bark begins to twist and curl like the shapes of pieces of a puzzle and then falls from the tree trunk. With time, the branches will do the same and the new bark under these strips of bark that fell, is the star of the show. Now the trunk will develop blotches of white, gold, tan, and gray all over it. This is nice on the tree during spring to the fall, but during the winter with a bit of snow cover, you are in for a real treat. So, move over white paper birches--the Stewartia will now be the king of the garden.

When you plant the tree, it will have a pyramidal shape but the plant will open up with age and become more rounded, growing 20 to 30 feet tall and just as wide. Plant the tree in a sunny location for the best flowers and fall color but it will tolerate partial shade. The better the soil is, the better it will grow and flower. A soil that is well-drained and moist, especially during the hot days of summer, is best. Also the soil should be on the acidic side, so be careful with the application of lime. Once established, the plant will grow 12 inches a year.

This is the type of plant that will make a wonderful focal point in your yard at any time of the year because of its foliage, flowers, seed pods and--yes--the bark. Plant the tree on the corner of your house or garage to balance your plantings. Plant it so you can see it while you enjoy your patio or pool during the summer. But make sure you can see it from your window during the winter season.



The Stewartia tree is hardy to zone 4 to 7 and will tolerate temperatures down to minus 20 to 30 degrees below zero. When you plant, be sure to condition the soil with compost and animal manure to help the plant get established more quickly, and use mycorrhizae to speed up root development. Stewartia can be purchased as a single-stem plant to grow as tree or a multi-stem plant for a broader spreading plant. If you have a large space, plant 3 tree in a triangle shape, and space them 20 feet apart for spectacular effects.

Cut out a large planting bed and cover with bark mulch to help cool the roots during the heat of summer. If you plant groups of variegated green and white leaf hosta under the tree, it will make the plant more colorful when in bloom in July.

Fertilize every spring during April with Plant-Tone fertilizer to help make more flowers on the tree and improve the fall leaf color. Look for this tree now at your local nursery and they can get it for you when spring arrives...in 24 DAYS.

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We all have a hot sunny window on south side of the house that just seems to cook everything we put there. Well, I have a plant for you that will laugh at all that heat. The plant is called "donkey's tail." It belongs to the sedum family of plants--that's right the sedum family that many of us have growing in our perennial gardens that are covered with snow right now. The family originated in Mexico and I am sure it will not tolerate the foot or more of white stuff in your yard right now.

The donkey's tail is a succulent plant with thick leaves that hold a lot of water, like tiny water balloons. Because of this ability, the plant can go as long as a month without water if your home is below 70 degrees during the winter months. What it will not tolerate is wet soils; I suggest that you keep it indoors all year long, because heavy rain during the summer months in a container that does not drain well could destroy the plant quickly. If your container has a built-in saucer, make sure you never keep water in it and drain it after watering.

The plant is made up of many thick gray-green stems about the diameter of a telephone wire cord. This stem is covered with tiny one-inch jelly-bean shaped leaves that are gray-green in color, with a bit of a rounded point on the end. These leaves are arranged in a spiral fashion from the soil line right to the tip on this stem.

The color of the leaves is unique because of a dust-like growth on it, called the "bloom." If you have ever picked fresh grapes you have notice that when rubbed, the color of the grape changes when the bloom is removed. I have been told by home wine makers that grapes with a lot of this bloom on them will make a better tasting wine. Now you know a new garden term, "the bloom," and you're not talking about flowers. When you water the plant and spill water on the foliage, it will temporarily loose this bloom but as the moisture dries it will return.

The leaves are very delicate, and will fall off the plant easily if you handle it a lot. I like to grow the plant in a hanging basket so I can enjoy the branches as they cascade down from the weight on all these unique leaves. If you cannot hang the plant, set it on top of an inverted container on your window sill, to better enjoy the foliage.

When the branches get to long for your window, carefully prune them them back and stick the portion you removed from the plant into a pot of soil and watch it quickly begin to take root. Use a cactus-type soil, one that is well -drained but is able to hold moisture--not a real sandy potting soil. If you should break off some of those jelly-bean like leaves, save them and push some of them into a pot of soil about half way in. These leaves will quickly start to make their own root system and in just a few weeks you'll have new plants.

Here is how you grow them in your home. Water regularly, from spring to the fall, April to October, allowing the soil to dry out again before watering. Keep the soil almost dry the rest of the year, especially if the window is cooler than the rest of the house. The plant will tolerate drying out for up to a month if it's cool, but if the window gets hot with the winter sunshine, water every 2 to 3 weeks.

Fertilize with a mild fertilizer, or only use what you have at half the recommended rate, while the plant is growing from spring to fall. During the winter, do not fertilize at all, as the plant likes to go dormant and rest like a cactus does. When rooting new cuttings use Fertilome Rooting and Blooming plant food, it will speed up the rooting process.

Plants should be repotted every 2 to 3 years and you should use a container only a couple of inches larger than the old container. A soil like Espoma's new potting soil or Miracle-Gro potting soil is perfect, but keep away from heavy soil mixes.

If you take good care of the plant and it likes your window it will make small red to pink flowers during the early summertime. This is a plant with real character and will give your window garden much character all year long. Your local greenhouse will have donkey's tail where cactus is sold, in small pots or in hanging baskets. Just remember one thing; they are delicate, so move them carefully from the greenhouse to your home. If the weather is cold place them in a box and cover it with plastic to keep the cold off the plant. Never put one in the typical paper plant sleeve or you will damage the branches (though you will also have many loose leaves with which to start new plants). Enjoy!

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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...
- Weather records page
- 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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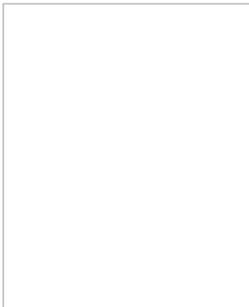


This Week's Question:

I am a member of the cabbage family, and a close relative of cauliflower. One of my biggest claims to fame is being hated by an ex-President of the United States. What am I?

[**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 National Floral Emblem of the United States?

Last Week's Winner:

Lee Swift

Last Week's Answer:

The rose.

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:

Terrific Turkey Chili



What You'll Need:

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 1/2 pounds ground turkey
- 1 (1 ounce) package taco seasoning mix
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon chili pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can beef broth
- 1 (7 ounce) can salsa
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can crushed tomatoes, or coarsely chopped tomatoes packed in puree
- 1 (7 ounce) can chopped green chili peppers
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 3 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise and sliced
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Step by Step:

- Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large stock pot over medium-high heat.
- Crumble turkey into the pot, stirring with a wooden spoon to break apart as much as possible.
- Season with taco seasoning mix, coriander, oregano, chili flakes, and tomato paste, and mix until meat is evenly coated with seasonings.
- Continue cooking, reducing heat if necessary, until turkey is well browned.
- Pour in beef broth, and simmer to reduce liquid slightly, about 5 minutes.
- Add salsa, tomatoes, and green chilies, and continue cooking at a moderate simmer for ten minutes. Adjust the thickness at any time by adding water.
- While chili is still cooking, heat one tablespoon of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
- Cook onion and green bell pepper, stirring occasionally for 5 minutes, or until onion is translucent and bell pepper is lightly browned.
- Add onion and bell pepper to the chili, and continue cooking at a very low simmer.
- In the same skillet in which you cooked the onion and bell pepper, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat.
- Add the zucchini, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until lightly browned.
- Add the zucchini to the chili, reduce heat, and continue cooking 15 minutes more. Again, adjust the consistency by adding water as needed.
- Ladle chili into serving bowls.
- Top with sour cream, green onion, and cheddar cheese, and serve.



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