

From: Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>
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Edition 12.06	Paul Parent Garden Club News	February 9, 2012
 <p data-bbox="592 477 799 506">Featured Quote :</p> <p data-bbox="343 510 1046 584">"I once had a rose named after me and I was very flattered. But I was not pleased to read the description in the catalogue: no good in a bed, but fine up against a wall."</p> <p data-bbox="343 589 531 611">~ Eleanor Roosevelt</p> <div data-bbox="518 645 759 680" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 16px; width: 151px; margin: 10px auto;"></div> <div data-bbox="576 752 702 788" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 16px; width: 79px; margin: 10px auto;"></div> <p data-bbox="213 831 1054 1008">The type of flowers you select does not matter, it's the quality of the flower that does! This weekend, as you look at the flowers for your special Valentine (for her and yes for him, as men love flowers too), let me tell you about them. We all have our favorites, we all have a budget to think of, and we want them to last as long as possible. Begin by selecting a florist, garden center, or nursery you are acquainted with for quality. You may pay a bit more--but in the long run it will be worth the extra expense. Avoid flowers that will be finished blooming in just a couple of days or drooping over the day after Valentine's Day.</p> <p data-bbox="213 1023 1062 1223">The number one Valentine's Day flower is, of course, the rose--and the growers of roses know this. There are only so many available for that day, so you will pay more for roses and of course more for red roses than other colored roses. Supply and demand determines the price of everything you purchase--and this is a one day holiday, not a month like Christmas. So do not always blame the higher cost of flowers on your florist. A bouquet of mixed color roses will be less expensive and will send the same message. Often the pink, white, lavender, yellow, or bi-colored roses have better fragrance than the red roses do. The longer the stems, the more expensive the roses will be--so what is the matter with shorter stems? Nothing.</p> <p data-bbox="213 1238 1054 1415">When you select your roses for Valentine's Day, here is what to look for. Look at the shape of the flower buds, as they are not all alike. Some roses open by unraveling one petal at a time in a spiral fashion; this is a classic rose. I want you to gently squeeze that flower bud. It should feel firm, not soft, as soft rose buds have been kept under refrigeration for some time. If it feels hard and looks like a Hershey Kiss, it is called a "bullet," and was picked too early by the grower (not the florist) and it will not open. Look for firm roses that are unraveling on the tip of the rosebud! Foliage color and appearance is next; the better it looks, the longer the flowers will last.</p> <p data-bbox="213 1431 1054 1581">Roses keep best in a cool place, so keep them away from heat sources and "out of the sun." Every morning, add a bit of ice to the vase that is kept filled with water to cool the plant down and extend the flowering time. Never allow the leaves on the rose to be under water; remove them from the stem, as they will rot and this will shorten the flowering time also. If you're transporting flowers home from the florist, be sure to keep them warm, as freezing temperatures will damage the flower buds--have them wrapped properly!</p> <p data-bbox="213 1597 1038 1671">Lilies are also very beautiful, more delicate looking, and will last just as long. What you are looking for in a bouquet of lilies is more flower buds than open flowers when you receive them. The Oriental types are the most fragrant, and I like them more than roses for the fragrance.</p> <p data-bbox="213 1686 1054 1812">Carnations are wonderful and will last the longest, if they are fresh. Here is what to look for when choosing carnations. Just under the flower you will see a green capsule-like growth; this is the actual flower bud, and that is where the flower petals came from. Gently squeeze it and if it feels firm, it means that there are still flower petals inside yet to come. If it feels empty or hollow, all the petals are out and it will not last as long in your home.</p> <p data-bbox="213 1827 1054 1926">Gerber daisies are also a wonderful cut flower and will last a couple of weeks. Nice long stems with 3-inch wide blooms that are often multi-petal and unique looking. This is also your chance to use nice foliage as filler because this flower has no foliage. Add secondary flowers like baby's breath for contrast. Gerber daisy comes in all colors like the rainbow,</p> <p data-bbox="213 1942 1054 2040">Alstroemeria is another unusual cut flower that comes in all colors and will last in your home for a long time. The flower is a cluster of small 1 inch lily-shaped blooms on a strong stem that open just a few at a time with many buds visible. This flower is a great cut flower for a warm homes or the office.</p> <p data-bbox="213 2056 1054 2130">Tulips are always wonderful at this time of the year, especially when the winter has been as snowy and cold as it has been. Tulips also send a message that spring is just around the corner, and if your special sweetheart has "cabin fever," this flower will help them to feel better.</p>		<p data-bbox="1123 495 1342 517">Gifts for the Gardener</p> <p data-bbox="1078 542 1366 616">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p> <p data-bbox="1126 728 1337 750">Contact Information:</p> <p data-bbox="1078 777 1262 826">E-Mail: Click to contact us.</p> <p data-bbox="1078 851 1382 949">Telephone: (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p data-bbox="1078 976 1219 1025">Fax: (207) 985-6972</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1050 1313 1149">Address: Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1173 1307 1247">Regular Phone Hours: Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p data-bbox="1086 1357 1374 1433">Tell your friends about Paul! Send them a copy of Paul's latest newsletter.</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1460 1382 1559">(Note: this will not subscribe them to the newsletter, nor retain their email - it will just send them a copy from you.)</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1592 1208 1615">Your e-mail</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1632 1163 1657">[]</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1671 1204 1693">Your name</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1711 1163 1736">[]</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1749 1208 1771">Their e-mail</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1789 1163 1814">[]</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1827 1208 1850">Their name</p> <p data-bbox="1078 1868 1163 1892">[]</p> <p data-bbox="1177 1919 1286 1944">[Send >>]</p> <p data-bbox="1107 2112 1358 2134">Where can I find Paul on</p>

The Hawaiian 'King' protea is my favorite flower and hard to come by, but it will last for 2 to 3 weeks in a vase of water. When the flower begins to fade, empty the vase and use it in a dry arrangement for the next year. The 'King' protea is a 5 to 6 inch pink bell-shaped tropical flower with an intricate looking center. It grows in only 5 places in the world, because it needs special growing conditions. Hawaii has these special conditions and many florists can get them for you if you call them now.

No matter what you choose, your special Valentine will appreciate the effort. Remember quality, colors, texture, and--most of all--presentation. For extra points, guys, remember flowers sent to her work or even his workplace will mean even more. For this to happen order NOW, not Monday during your lunch hour. Valentine's Day is the busiest time of the year for the florist to deliver flowers because it's a one day holiday. The earlier the better, or they could think you forgot them and just remembered when someone reminded you!

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In the days of the mighty Roman Empire, the fennel plant was enjoyed as a culinary plant and used in all types of food preparation. It was also used for its medicinal properties, as it was believed to help with many common ailments. It was used by the gladiators to keep them fierce and strong, and a bouquet of fennel was worn by many to help keep them in good health during battle. It was mixed with a gladiator's daily food to help him beat down his opponents.

The ladies of Rome used the fennel plant to keep slim and young looking. During the many celebrations of the Roman Empire, fennel was one of the main ingredients used in all types of bread, cakes, and salads to calm the hunger pangs before the festivities began.

The magical properties of the fennel plant were used to help people get through the fasting days of special holidays. When the Pilgrims landed on our shores, it was eaten along with dill to help keep them attentive during the long church services. In the 10th Century, it was hung over the front door to keep out witches and was a common ingredient for magic and spells. Also, some early writings show that the seeds were used in broths and drinks for those who had grown fat and lazy to help them grow slimmer and have more energy to get back to work.

Today fennel is best used for additional seasoning for fatty meats like pork and beef or in stuffing for chicken and lamb. If you're making a fresh garden salad, it is a must in your salad dressing. Use the seeds in sauces and gravies, also when cooking fresh fish or when mixed in bread dough. The fresh picked leaves and stems are best when chopped finely and used in salads for extra flavor.

As the plants begin to fade with the season, pull them up from the garden and wash the plant with fresh water to remove all the soil from around the roots and dry what remains of the plant. Next time you cook fresh fish--especially oily fish like mackerel or bluefish--or even chicken on the charcoal grill, add a few sprigs of the dried herb to the hot coals as you cook for a wonderful smell around your patio and additional flavor to your cooking. When your fennel plant is in full bloom, pick off some of the wonderful fragrant flowers and break them into small florets and add to your fresh salads. Just in case you never grew fennel before, the entire plant has an aniseed/licorice-like smell and taste, not overpowering.

Fennel is an annual for most of us, but if you allow the flowers to mature in the garden they will spread seeds everywhere and sprout up every year in the springtime, making the plant resemble a perennial herb. Always grow a bit extra, as you will often find unusual caterpillars feasting on the foliage of the plant. When these unique creatures mature beautiful swallowtail butterflies will emerge for your enjoyment. I always grow extra for the wonderful soft and feathery foliage the plant produces that looks great with fresh-cut flowers from the garden.

You can start your seedlings right now in small pots to make it easy to transplant to the garden in May or you can start in cell packs like your egg trays. Use a light seed-starting soil and keep the soil moist and warm to speed germination. I like to use seed trays with clear plastic domes over the tray or just place a few toothpicks in the soil and lay plastic wrap over the tray. The toothpicks keep the plastic wrap off the soil and help to create a wonderful humidity in the soil and around the sprouting seeds for faster germination. Remove the coverings when 50% of the seeds have germinated--in about 7 to 14 days.

When you get ready to plant into the garden, make sure the soil is soft and well-drained, as fennel will not do well in heavy clay-like soils. Adding sandbox sand to clay soils will help; this sand can be purchased at any garden center in the spring. Compost, animal manure, and peat moss are also wonderful additives to encourage good plant development. If you live near the seashore, get down to the beach on the next nice day and collect bags of seaweed to add to your soil if it's heavy, or even on the sandy side. Your fennel plants will always give you a better crop if you prepare the soil first.

Your fennel plants, like many of the other herbs, love a sunny location that never has standing water during the winter months--if it does, the seeds from last year's flowers will rot during the winter months. Sometimes they will come back for you the following spring if the soil stays moist but not wet. Set out seedlings when the threat of frost is over and always plant seed about the same time--usually mid to late May--as warm soils will give you better germination.

Space your fennel seedlings 6 inches apart and in rows 12 to 18 in apart for the best foliage production. If the weather gets real hot and dry water frequently or the plant will thin out, grow real tall and produce fewer seeds, plus the entire plant will have a more powerful fragrance--sometimes overpowering--when eaten or used for cooking. Watered regularly and well fed, the

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plant will have the shape of a ball of cotton candy-like foliage that is soft green and just beautiful in your garden. There is also a purple foliage variety called Fennel 'Purpureum' that will give your herb garden much color and contrast.

You can also grow fennel in a shallow trench and when the base of the plants and roots begin to swell to about the size of a golf ball, mound soil around it about 4 inches high. This is called "blanching," and the soil will block out all the sunlight, turning the stem and roots white--with enhanced flavor. After 2 to 3 weeks the golf ball-sized growth will increase to 3 to 4 inches and is ready for harvest and cooking in the early fall season.

If you love the foliage, pick off the flowers as they develop so the plant cannot make seeds and your plants will become bushier, with more branches and foliage on the plant. Pick the foliage as needed or freeze the leaves in zip-lock bags for winter use. This wonderful plant that is native to Asia and the Mediterranean can also be grown in containers with other herbs, but when it gets ready to flower you may have to stake the plant as they will grow taller in containers.

Fertilize every 2 weeks during the growing season with Miracle-Gro or Blooming and Rooting plant food. If you're a busy gardener, use Osmocote slow release pellets to keep plants well fed. Also if you're growing in a container, be sure to add Soil Moist granules to help hold water in your containers and keep the soil moist during those hot dry days of summer when the plants are growing best.

You can also plant fennel in the fall in containers for a wonderful winter crop on your window sill along with chives, parsley, oregano, rosemary, and dill. Enjoy!

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For most of the country, the winter has been very mild, with most areas reporting little to no snow cover. Could this become a problem or a real benefit to the northern part of the country and your gardens? Think about this: Florida had no rain from October 30 to February 6, something that is very rare--and temperatures were also above normal. Texas had no rain all summer and above normal temperatures most of those days. The entire Northeast had more snow with the freak snow storm in October (with 6 to 12 inches), than it did for the rest of the winter so far. Boston and New York City have had less than 6 inches of snow and record warmth for the months of November to February. There is little to no frost in the ground in the entire Northeast part of the country. The cherry blossoms were in bloom during December and January in Washington D.C. Most of North Dakota cannot remember a Christmas without snow on the ground--until this year. What does this mean to you as a gardener, and what should we do about it now?

Soils in the Northeast are on the acidic side, and if we have a mild and dry spring the soil will stay acidic, which will slow down growth on our lawn and gardens. While the rainfall is normal how about applying your limestone, wood ash or lime substitute products to the lawn and garden now; let's get it working in the soil now while we have moisture in the ground. If you have a heavy soil with clay in it, let's apply Garden Gypsum to help break up the soil, so the roots can develop better this spring.

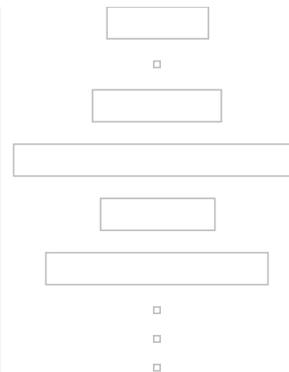
The most important and often neglected part of our gardens is organic matter in our soils. While we can, let's add a nice thick layer of compost, animal manure, shredded leaves, and pine needles on top of the gardens. If you live near the seashore, pack up the kids on the weekend and head to the beach to collect seaweed by the trash barrel or fill up your pickup truck to help rebuild your garden soil. The ground is firm, not soft and muddy, making it the perfect time to receive a truck load of manure without damaging your lawn. Spread it over the garden and the rains will wash in all the goodness to your soil. You can even rototill the lime and organic matter in your gardens now and save time when spring arrives. Lime, wood ash, or lime substitutes like Magic-Cal from Jonathan Green will change everything!

If the weekend weather is nice, how about edging out the flower beds, so they are ready to be covered with bark mulch or compost when the nurseries have it in stock. If the weather stays this warm, they will have it for you by mid-March this spring, so get ready while the weather is in your favor. If you can spread the mulch on your perennial flower beds and foundation planting now--before they wake up and begin to grow--it will save you time and eliminate all the hard work. Plants are still dormant and you can use a rake to spread the mulch, and not use just your hands in fear of damaging the delicate new shoots coming out of the ground.

This is also a great time to do tree work around your home and help open up the shaded areas with pruning or tree removal. Sunshine will make a difference to your lawn and garden, so before the tree companies get busy, give them a call for prices to open up your yard and let in the sunshine. While your trees are dormant is the best time of the year to prune them--and also the easiest time, because you can see all the branching structure of the tree and make better judgment of what has to be cut or removed.

All of your commercial orchards are pruning now, so if you have fruit trees, let's begin to prune them to remove the dead, dying, or broken branches. Let's prune to control the size of the trees and to create a better shaped and better looking tree.

If you're working in the yard and there are areas in your lawn that are still covered with leaves, don't rake them; mow them with your lawn mower and turn those dried up leaves to rich organic matter for the lawn. Ground up leaves and pine needles will break down even faster when you apply your fertilizer in late March to early April. If you play golf you know that they NEVER rake up the grass clippings and leaves on the course, they mow them and turn them into food for the soil and the grass. Don't bag your leaves and grass, recycle your organic waste back into the soil.



Because the winter has been so mild, we could have a real problem with insects and disease this year! You heard right...a real problem. A potentially greater problem with common and unusual insects because the cold did not kill off insects like it normally does. Ken Kukorowski of the Bayer Advance lawn and garden division has told me that he is concerned about exotic and common insect and disease problems for this year. Ken told me that when temperatures stay warmer than normal and we have no snow cover, more insects are able to tolerate the winter weather and survive better.

Such insects as the wooly adelgid, the long horn beetle and more are stopped from moving further north with the cold winter weather. So potentially Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, North west Massachusetts and New York State could have major insect problems this year. Also many disease problems like powdery mildew and leaf spot spores have not been killed without the cold weather.

Ken Kukorowski has his PHD in science, and he is a concerned scientist specializing in insects. Ken wants all of you to get out in your yards on those nice days and spray all your flowering trees, fruit trees, rose bushes and your foundation plantings with a good "All Season Oil" to smother and kill insect eggs that are on your plants now. This spraying can make a tremendous difference on insect problems in your yard this spring. Use a copper fungicide also to kill of many of the disease spores still on your plants as they will soon wake up with the warm weather and, like the insects, cause you many problems later. An ounce of prevention now will save you many hours of work and frustration later. These products are natural and much safer to use than traditional insecticide.

By April first, be sure to apply "Tree and Shrub Systemic Insecticide" to your evergreen trees, especially your Canadian hemlock and your ash trees, because these two trees have real problems with exotic insects like the wooly adelgid and the long horn beetle. With the development of new systemic insecticides developed by Bayer Advanced, controlling insects today is easier and much safer for you--the home owner. Because the product is added to the soil, not sprayed up onto the foliage of the plant, it cannot drift on you, as you apply the product to the plants. It is also inside the plant, so water will not wash off the product, making it last longer in the plant.

So just be prepared for an early spring this year, and use the nice days we are now getting to get things done that take time from your hectic gardening schedule. If you can kill the bugs now, before they hatch, you will eliminate possibly hundreds of insects in your yard and garden. Work done now equals more time later for you to go to the golf course, go fishing or just sit down on the back deck enjoying the summer. Think about it!!!

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Susan Hill's sculpture 'The Giant's Head' in the Lost Gardens of Heligan

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Trivia will be returning soon.



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
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- 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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- 6 (1-ounce) squares bittersweet chocolate
- 2 (1-ounce) squares semisweet chocolate
- 10 tablespoons (1 1/4 stick) butter
- 1/2 cup all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Step by Step:

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.
- Grease 6 (6-ounce) custard cups.
- Melt the chocolates and butter in the microwave, or in a double boiler.
- Add the flour and sugar to chocolate mixture.
- Stir in the eggs and yolks until smooth. Stir in the vanilla.
- Divide the batter evenly among the custard cups.
- Place in the oven and bake for 12 minutes. The edges should be firm but the center will be runny.
- Take a knife and dip into hot water, run the knife along the edges to loosen the cake, invert onto a desert plate and enjoy!

Yield: 6 servings



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