



FEATURED QUOTE :

"Nature never did betray the heart that loved her."

~**William Wordsworth**

Product Spotlight

Shoo Mold by Lynwood Laboratories

- Safe and non-toxic.
- Cleans mold and mildew for up to one year.
- All natural enzyme is safe on clothing, curtains, leather, carpets, walls and floors.
- Penetrates plasterboard.
- Pleasant fragrance.

Cut Flowers

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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.

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,

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 home or the office.

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.

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!

Growing Roses

If you are looking to grow roses that you may receive during Valentine's Day in your garden, then consider moving to California. But if you want better roses than the florist can supply you, think about growing roses in your garden. It won't be easy, it will be a lot of work, but it is possible to have wonderful, fragrant roses from your own garden.

Here is what you will need. Choose a location in your yard that has sun all day long, not just part of the day--but all day! If that location is sheltered from the harsh winter winds, it would be a big plus for the rose bushes. Strong winds, especially during a winter with little to no snow cover, are rough on the plants because they are dry and the wind will rob the plant of moisture. If your chosen location is

open, then be sure to build a mound of organic matter like bark mulch or top soil around the plant 12 to 18 inches high in the shape of an igloo in the late fall.

I also recommend that each fall you spray those roses with an anti-desiccant spray like Wilt-Pruf or Wilt-Stop to help seal in moisture in the stems before you cover the plant with organic matter. Also NEVER prune your roses back in the fall, always in the spring but—again--NEVER in the fall! If your roses are getting tall and you want to prune them back, it must be done in early September. This is possible while the plant is actively growing so the plant will be able to produce callouses on the area where you cut to seal the stem from the wind. Winter protection is a must if you want your roses to survive the winter season--or you could just wish for 3 feet of snow that will protect the plants with a blanket effect.

You have the location, now let us work on the soil. The better you prepare the area before you plant, the better they will grow for you. Remember that these plants will be in your garden for many years, so put the effort into the soil now for better plants in the future. Roses like a well-drained soil. If spring rains and winter ice build up in the soil around the roots, the plant will suffer and will not grow well. If you have a clay type soil, just blend a lot of organic matter like compost, peat moss, animal manure, and coarse sharp sand to break up the clay. Yearly applications of a garden gypsum like Soil Logic Liquid Gypsum will help break up the clay particles.

Once the roses are planted, be sure to cover the ground with organic matter like bark mulch, compost, pine needles, or peat moss. This will keep out weeds, hold the heat in the ground longer in the fall season, keep moisture in the ground longer during the hot days of summer, and help to protect the roots of the plant during the winter by keeping it frozen once it does freeze. Stay away from stone mulches, as they will heat up the ground during hot weather, increasing the need to water.

Water is important to roses and they will need 1 to 2 inches of water a week during the summer. If water supply is not adequate, the plant will not develop as quickly and the number of flowers will be less. Watering roses is important, but not as important as how you water them! If you can put the water around the plant without wetting the foliage, your disease problems will be cut back a great deal. Never use a sprinkler system that applies water overhead or a sprinkler attached to your hose to water plants. Take off the nozzle and let the water run on the ground between plants or better still lay a drip hose on the ground around the plants before you cover the plants with mulch.

Fertilizer is also important and roses love to be fed regularly. Feed them every month with a granular food designed for roses or a liquid food every two weeks. Fertilizer is applied in early April and this should continue until September first. NO fertilizer after September first, because you want the plant to prepare itself for the winter--and if you feed it, the plant will continue to make new growth. You want the plant to stop growing and begin to thicken the stems, bark and tissue to help prevent wind damage during the winter.

Insect and disease problems come to your garden when you plant roses, but you can minimize the problems if you plan ahead. Gardening companies like Bonide Lawn and Garden, Ortho, and Bayer Advance have wonderful products to help control these problems. Set up a prevention program early in the spring and keep on it during the growing season to minimize problems.

Now get yourself a good book on roses, read it during these snowy days and begin to select the roses you would like in your garden. Think, hardiness, resistance to problems, fragrance, color, and--most of all--repeating blooms. Enjoy.

Growing Snow Peas & Snap Peas

February is turning out to be a real snow maker month for us...but we have gained over 1 1/2 hours of daylight since December, the sun is higher in the sky and spring is just 37 days away now, YEA! So, let's start thinking about planting the vegetable garden. The first vegetable we plant, even when the ground and the weather are still cold, is the snow pea. If you love peas like I do, you must grow them in your garden--and I want to tell you why!

First of all, as good a job as the supermarket does to provide you with fresh produce, peas start to lose their sweetness and quality as soon as they are harvested; they do not store well. This spring,

pick some peas from your garden and store them in your refrigerator for 4 days, now pick more peas fresh from the garden and cook them the same way as the 4 days old peas; you will be able to taste the difference between the two crops. So, if you love peas, you must have your own pea patch in the garden this spring. Because the crop is harvested early you can harvest the crop of peas and replant the same area with beans, Swiss chard, radishes, or heat-tolerant lettuce, giving you two crops in the same garden area. Now, peas are broken down into 3 main types to choose from: the common garden pea, edible-podded peas/snow peas and the snap pea.

Let's begin with the old fashioned garden pea, because we all grew up with this type of pea and it is readily available in cans or frozen packages. These peas are sweet, delicate, tender, and tasty but the protective pods that cover the peas are tough and inedible, so they are thrown out and you lose part of your crop. My mother was picking this type of pea from her garden on June 16, 1949 when she went into labor in her garden with me--and in just 3 hours I was born; now you know why I like peas. When my dad came to visit us in the hospital that night, he brought my mother some of the fresh peas she picked, all cooked for her supper--true story!

The second type of pea is the edible-podded pea, called the snow pea. This variety will tolerate a light snow when growing in your garden--really. This variety will produce tender and flavorful pods when they are harvested when the pea inside the pod is small and underdeveloped. Pick these as soon as you begin to notice the small peas inside the pod beginning to bulge out and form bumps on the pod.

The third type is the newest; they are sweet and crunchy and you eat the pods along with the fully mature peas in them. This type is called a snap pea and is very popular in Chinese food or when cooked in a wok. They are loved for the delicate edible pod and the full-sized peas in them; no waste because you eat everything--just pick, and cook. This new type comes in a bush type growing to 3 feet tall (great for containers) or the pole type that will grow up to 8 feet tall but needs support to grow on, like a trellis or fencing. The only thing this type of pea needs is for you to remove the string that runs along the side of the pod before cooking; the string can be tough. I love to eat them raw, fresh out of the garden in salads, steamed, or stir-fried.

When you plant in the garden use these easy steps:

- Plant as soon as the ground is workable and in a soil that is well drained.
- Condition the soil with animal manure, compost, or seaweed before planting and add fertilizer such as Dr. Earth Home Grown Organic vegetable fertilizer with Probiotic. This new technology in garden fertilizer called Probiotic will increase your production and it is all natural and organic. Not only that, it will build up the quality of your soil for future crops.
- Now set up your support system like wire fencing or garden netting tied to garden stakes for support.
- To help increase production. I always purchase a package of seed inoculant for my peas and beans to encourage the development of nitrogen fixing nodules on the root system. These nodules that form on the roots pull the nitrogen from the air and store it in the nodule on the roots. When you're done harvesting the crop, cut the plant at the ground level and let the roots and nodules rot in the ground so you can take advantage of the free nitrogen the plant has made in the ground for future crops.
- Plant your seed 1 to 1.5 inches deep and 2 inches apart. I always plant a double row of seeds one on each side of the fence or trellis for a bigger crop.
- If you're planting several rows, space the rows 2 feet apart.
- Water often until the seeds begin to germinate and keep the ground moist at all times for stronger producing plants.
- As the plants begin to sprout, train them to the support system you made and they will quickly attach themselves to them and grow up quickly.

Water well and often, especially if the weather gets warm, to help the plant produce a better crop. I liquid-feed with compost tea or Miracle-Gro every other week also. If weeds begin to develop around the plants, hand weed your plants--never use a garden hoe, as the roots are shallow-growing and this will damage them. You can use straw or compost to control weeds that develop around the plants once the plants develop.

Now, harvest your peas when they have matured and filled out but before they begin to get hard and tough. Young and tender peas have more flavor, and are still crisp; look for the nice deep green color on the pod. Pick often and enjoy your fresh picked peas as they mature in your garden.

The Paul Parent Garden Club is pleased to announce that we have 2 more new radio stations coming on board.

WJML	Petoskey, MI	AM1110	9 TO 10 a.m. EST
WJNL	Kingsley, MI	AM 1210	9 TO 10 a.m. EST

Welcome! We are privileged to help you prepare your garden for the spring ahead!

Alaska Trip

Paul Parent will be hosting a tour that includes:

Vancouver, BC

- Butchart Gardens--55 acres of floral display!
- Cruising the Inside Passage:
- Ketchikan
- Icy Strait Point
- Juneau
- Skagway
- Hubbard Glacier Cruising
- Seward
- Scenic Drive to Anchorage
- Denali National Park
- Fairbanks City Tour, a tour of the Gold Dredge # 8 and a cruise down the Chena river on the Riverboat Discovery Sternwheeler.

Trivia

This Week's Question

The oldest known bristlecone pine tree is around...

2,000 years old

3,000 years old

4,000 years old

5,000 years old

6,000 years old

This Week's Prize:

Bio-tone® Starter Plus

All Natural Plant Food Enhanced with Bacteria and Mycorrhizae

- Microbe-enhanced all natural plant food
- Includes both endo and ecto mycorrhizae
- Grows larger root mass to help plants establish fast
- Promotes bigger blooms
- Reduces transplant loss

Last Week's Question:

Which of the following items is NOT recommended for composting?

- A. Coffee grounds
- B. Leaves
- C. Leftover meat
- D. Leftover vegetables
- E. Newspaper

Last Week's Winner:

Judy Siemonsma

Last Week's Answer:

C. Leftover meat. (Note: Meat can be composted - but for a number of reasons is best done with anaerobic composting, which most home gardeners don't do.)

Last Week's Prize:

Bio-tone® Starter Plus

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!

Garden Journal

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



Featured Recipe: New England Clam Chowder

What You'll Need:

- 3 8 oz. bottles of clam juice
- 1 lb. potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 3 slices of bacon, finely chopped
- 2 cups onions, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 1/4 cup celery, diced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 10 oz. cans of whole baby clams or minced clams
- 1 1/4 cups half and half
- 1 tsp. hot pepper sauce
- salt and pepper to taste

Step by Step:

- Melt butter over medium heat in a large pot.
- Add bacon and cook until it begins to brown.
- Add onions, garlic and celery, bay leaf. Sauté until vegetables are soft, about 6 mins.
- Stir in flour and cook 2 mins. (don't let flour brown).
- Gradually whisk in the bottles of clam juice.
- Add potatoes, clams with the juice, half and half and hot pepper sauce.
- Simmer chowder for 5 mins. to blend flavors, stirring frequently.
- Season to taste with salt and pepper.

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Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM

Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM