

**From:** Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2011 12:03 PM  
**To:** rickmorin@earthlink.net  
**Subject:** Paul Parent Garden Club News - March 10, 2011

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Edition 11.10	Paul Parent Garden Club News	March 10, 2011
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FEATURED QUOTE :</b> "Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed." ~Francis Bacon</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gifts for the Gardener</b> <a href="#">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Original ComposTumbler</b></p> <p><b>Makes Compost in 10-14 Days!</b></p> <p>Here's the garden composting product that started a revolutionary new way to make compost nearly 40 years ago! This batch composter has the largest capacity - it holds up to 18 bushels! It's easy to load. It's easy to turn. It saves time and labor while providing you with a steady supply of your own homemade compost in just two weeks (or less!)</p> <p>Easy as 1, 2, 3! 1. Just load it. 2. Give it a few spins, then give it a few spins every day for 2 weeks. 3. In just 14 days take out your finished compost.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p><b>E-Mail:</b> <a href="#">Click to contact us.</a></p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p><b>Fax:</b> (207) 985-6972</p> <p><b>Address:</b> Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p><b>Phone Hours:</b> Monday-Saturday 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Have a Look Around Our Website:</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div> <p><b>Subscribe to our newsletter!</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here to subscribe, unsubscribe or change your address.</a></p>		

front of a sliding glass door where drafts are not a problem. Drafty growing areas will cause bud drop on the plant! Room temperatures of 60 to 65 degrees are best for the plant to grow in.

Fertilize from the time you put the plant out for the summer to the time you bring it back inside in the fall. Use an acid-based liquid fertilizer like Mir-Acid every 2 weeks. The rest of the year no fertilizer is needed, as the plant is not growing, it is preparing to flower for you and needs to stay dormant.

Water is important to the plant. It must be watered regularly spring to fall and less often during the winter. Never let the plant dry out or your flowers will turn yellow when they come into bloom--and you will lose much of the fragrance also. Now you know why some of your flowers have turned yellow rather than soft- powdery white in color.

Air moisture or humidity is most important to this plant if you want to enjoy the flowers on the plant during the winter and early spring. Gardenias will not grow very well in a home heated with forced hot air systems, wood, or coal stoves. These types of heat remove all the humidity in the air, and plants with flower buds will drop them just before they open. If you are trying to grow this plant, may I suggest that you keep the plant on top of a large saucer filled with small stones about the size of the width of the spread of the foliage? Add water to the saucer to the bottom of the pot every morning and watch it evaporate under the plant, creating moisture around the foliage to help it grow better. Also buy a misting bottle and mist the foliage and buds every time you walk by it. Wet the foliage, not the soil!

Re-potting the plant is necessary every spring when it has finished flowering or before you put it outside for the summer. Upgrading the size of the container by 2 inches every year will help the plant grow bigger and produce more flower buds. You must use a soil rich in organic matter, and it should contain about 50% compost or peat moss. If you're mixing your own soil, be sure to use a good garden soil or potting soil as a base. Also NEVER add lime to the soil or the foliage will turn yellow and general growth will slow down greatly.

If the plant is getting too big for your house, the best time to prune is in the early spring when the flowering is finished but before the new growth begins.

One last thing for you, if you purchase a new plant and the pot that the plant comes in has straight sides, you have the original pot the plant was grown in from the grower. Pull the plant out of the pot and examine the root ball; if it looks like a mass of roots you MUST repot the plant at once. The plant is pot-bound, the soil the grower used will dry up very fast in your home, and the plant will struggle. If you are to do only one thing from what I tell you, do this! You can grow this plant in your home and enjoy the flowers and the fragrance if you follow these easy steps. Enjoy!

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If you have cabin fever and are looking for a sign that spring is near, look to the pussy willow because SPRING is just around the corner--just 10 days away. The pussy willow is a native plant to wet areas all over the northeast U.S. and is winter-hardy to 20 to 30 below zero. So if you have a wet spot on your property, you must plant the pussy willow this spring so next spring you can enjoy a sign of hope after a long winter.

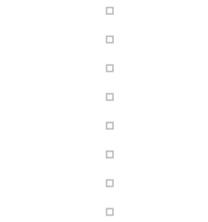
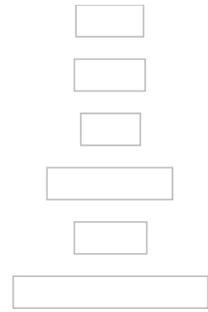
The pussy willow is a tall-growing shrub; if not pruned too much, it will grow 15 to 25 feet tall and 15 feet wide, about the size of a flowering crabapple. This plant is loved for one thing: its beautiful soft creamy-white catkins that form on the plant during March and April. The plant will grow upright with an oval appearance or shape. It is a plant of many trunks or branches--not a single stem plant like the flowering crabapple.

The pussy willow is fast growing; if planted in a wet area on your property it will grow 2 to 3 feet every year. The new growth is long and slender, making wonderful branches for cutting. They will look wonderful in a tall vase on your kitchen table. These branches are also very easy to force into bloom earlier than normal by just cutting the stems from the plant during February or March and placing them in a tall vase of water in a warm room. The buds will open, casting off the bud covering, and in just 7 to 10 days the soft catkins will emerge. When these buds get to the size of a jelly bean or larger, drain the vase of water, and keep them in the dry vase for several weeks.

The new growth or branches are dark brown, smooth, and shiny looking. They are about the thickness of a pencil, and the length is determined by the amount of water around the plant during the year. During the winter the stem is covered with pointed, 1/2 inch long, purple-brown buds. When the weather begins to warm up these buds will open to expose male catkins or flowers that will grow 1 to 2 inches long before turning yellow and falling from the plant. When they fall, new growth will develop and so will the foliage. The leaves are 2 to 4 inches long and about 1 inch wide. These leaves are dark green and the edges seem to be wavy and oval, with a dull point on the tip. This new growth starts off almost kelly green, but when they mature, the stems will quickly turn a rich dark brown.

The pussy willow will grow best in full sun but will tolerate a bit of shade late in the day. Too much shade will the make plant grow tall and thin, and it will produce few new branches with buds. This thinness will also make them vulnerable to snow damage when the snow is wet and heavy.

There is no special soil needed to grow this plant; just be sure to add plenty of compost, peat moss, or animal manure when you plant, so the roots will develop quickly in the spring. Wet soil is preferred--and this plant will help drain wet spots in your yard, making them more usable especially in the spring time. Like the giant weeping willow tree, keep this plant away from leaching fields or septic tank areas in your yards or the roots will quickly create problems for you by plugging the system.



The plant does look great all by itself but when planted in groups or in a row to create a barrier planting, it will wake up your yard in the early spring with color. If you like this plant and want to start your own plants, it is very easy to do. Take an empty half-gallon milk or juice bottle and cut off the top couple of inches of the container, fill it with soil from your garden and add water so the soil is now mud. Cut fresh pussy willows or buy fresh-cut pussy willows from your local garden center or florist and push them all the way to the bottom of the container of mud. The buds will soon fall from the branches, and make foliage and below all that mud, roots will also form quickly.

Put 3 to 5 branches in your container and arrange them to create a nice looking cluster of branches. When the foliage has grown to 3 to 5 inches long and you can see roots thru the milky plastic container it is time to transplant into your yard. Plant them as a single plant, and do not pull apart when planting. Keep wet until fall and fertilize with Plant-Tone fertilizer when you put them into the ground. The roots grow horizontally, so firm in place, but do not stamp the ground around the plant with your feet or you will break off the new roots.

If you want a truly fascinating variety, look for the Japanese Fantail pussy willow, called *Salix sachalinensis* 'Sekka.' This type has flat, twisted, curling branches with multiple rows of soft fluffy buds, and is often found at spring flower shows. They are wonderful for flower arrangements, but in your yard the shrubby tree will get you wonderful comments. The foliage will grow 4 to 6 inches long and the plant has more of a weeping growing habit to 15 feet tall and wide. If you have the room on your property, this is a plant you can grow, cut, and sell the branches to your local garden center in the spring time. Most businesses would jump to buy these branches from you. I would also check with them about growing plants for them to sell at their nursery, this plant is that unique!

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When you plan out your vegetable garden this spring, maybe this is the year for you to reserve space in your vegetable garden for permanent vegetables such as asparagus. Asparagus, horseradish, rhubarb, and all your berry plants are there for you year after year without replanting, saving you time in the early spring. And as the crops grow and mature, they are able to produce more vegetables and fruit each year. Let me tell you about asparagus first, and then you can decide if you want to invest time and space in your garden to grow this "succulent" vegetable.

Asparagus is the most expensive vegetable on the market today, in season at \$3.00 a pound and out of season at \$6 to \$7 a pound. Asparagus is not a difficult plant to grow in your garden; it's not fussy where it grows--all you need to provide is a sunny location in the garden, a bit of water and fertilizer, and then keep out the weeds. I consider tomatoes and cucumbers a staple in my vegetable garden but asparagus is the main course. Also, when the harvesting season is over, the asparagus plant will provide you with beautiful fernlike foliage to use in your flower arrangements all summer long.

Begin by selecting a location with full sun all day long, and remember that the foliage will get tall--up to 6 feet--so the location should be in the back or end of the garden, so as not to create shade on the other vegetables. Your soil should be well drained, but the plant will tolerate water in the early spring as long as it does not sit there for long periods. If possible, keep out of heavy winds, as the plant does grow tall and you do not want the foliage to blow over. If you can't keep it out of winds, create a wire brace around the planting rows about 4 feet tall.

The soil in the garden should be neutral to sweet, never on the acidic side, so add lime, wood ash, or Magic-Cal from Jonathan Green to keep soil from getting acidic every year; a pH of 6 to 7.5 is best. In the fall, clean the bed and add chicken or cow manure over the planting bed to help feed the plants during the winter and to prepare them for spring production. Once you clean the bed of all the dead foliage in the fall you can also add a couple inches of your compost over the bed and work it into the top 3 to 5 inches of soil. This will help to germinate some of the seed that fell from the foliage during the fall and start new plants to thicken the asparagus bed for next year.

Start by digging a trench 12 inches deep and 12 inches wide. Backfill the bottom 4 inches with soil that you conditioned with compost and animal manure, and firm it in place by walking in the trench. With your conditioned soil, make small mounds of soil about 4 inches high and wide. Space these mounds of soil on 12 inch centers in the center of the trench. Your asparagus roots will look like an octopus, with a central crown that contains buds on top, and roots below it that look like spaghetti. Place the crown on the top of the mound and spread out the roots evenly cascading down the mound of soil.

Add compost between each plant and cover the roots with soil, partially filling the trench. You want 2 inches of conditioned soil on top of the roots, leaving you 2 to 3 inches of the trench not filled. As the plants begin to grow, slowly fill in the trench to the level of the garden. This makes it easier for the new shoots to develop and poke through the soil. The asparagus roots you will be planting will be dormant and dry, so soak them in Compost Tea for an half an hour before planting, and dump the left over tea in the trench when planting. For the first time you can purchase compost tea at your local garden center or from a company called Nature's Solutions as a concentrate for your garden. Go to [www.nature-technologies.com](http://www.nature-technologies.com) for more information and a dealer who has the product.

You can buy asparagus roots from one to three years old from your garden center. The older the roots are, the better for a faster producing crop. Water often when young and keep the soil moist at all times but not wet. Plants will need 1 inch of water a week all summer long for the first couple of years to help establish them in your garden. Once established, they are on their own.

If you want to keep the weeds out of the bed, cover the soil with 2 inches of compost, pine needles, shredded leaves, straw, or peat moss. Stay away from bark mulch, because of acidity. Place over

established beds early in the spring before the new shoots poke through the ground. When weeding in the bed, never use tools; always use your hand, so as not to damage shoots still growing in the ground.

Male plants will have bigger and thicker stems; most people like this and that is why they purchase only male plants. I like all sizes so I go for more mature roots. Once you plant, you pick nothing the first year and the second year from the garden; just let the plants get established in the garden. Year 3, pick for 3 weeks, year 4 pick for 4 weeks, and year 5 on you can pick for 6 weeks. During the picking season, allow some of the spears that form to grow and produce foliage; this will help the plant get energy from the foliage that forms. If you wondering how many plant to plant in the garden, a rule of thumb is 5 roots per person in your family, or double that if you want to freeze them for the winter. Five people equals 25 roots.

Keep the onion family of plants away from asparagus beds. Onions, leeks, garlic, and chives will hurt your plantings, but tomatoes, parsley, and basil are good companions. The main insect on asparagus is beetles and they can be easily controlled with Garden Eight from Bonide. Give the asparagus room in your garden--that means a three foot wide area for them to grow in with a walkway on each side. Finally, asparagus beds will last in your garden for about 25 years so it is worth the initial effort when planting the first year. The better you prepare the soil, the better and longer the plant will produce for you!

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Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 am on Sunday, March 13, 2011 so be sure to set your clocks forward one hour! Your clocks should be set from 2:00 a.m. local standard time, to 3:00 a.m. local daylight time.

We remember to change our clocks by the phrase "Spring forward, fall back." As spring begins on March 20, 2011, why not embrace this season of renewal, and replace the batteries in all of your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. This simple act will reassure the safety of your family; properly working detectors save thousands of lives each year.

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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
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- 6 three year journal pages
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- 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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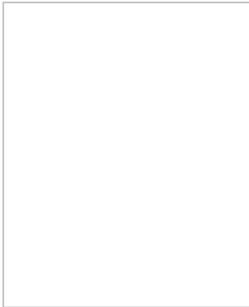


**This Week's Question:**

What is the botanical name for the Lenten rose?

[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:**

Name two members of the lily family that might be more commonly seen on the dinner plate than as the centerpiece. (There are more than two possibilities.)

**Last Week's Winner:**

Leonard Sherman

**Last Week's Answer:**

Leeks, chives, garlic.

**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:

### Buffalo Wing Dip



Have your buffalo wings without the mess! Serve this addicting dip with tortilla chips and celery sticks.

**What You'll Need:**

- 2 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 1 (12 fluid ounce) can or bottle hot chicken wing sauce
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 (16 ounce) bottle blue cheese dressing

**Step by Step:**

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
- Place chicken in a pot with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil and cook 25 minutes, until chicken juices run clear. Drain liquid from pot and shred chicken. Mix wing sauce and butter into pot. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer 10 minutes.
- Spread cream cheese over the bottom of an 8x8 inch baking dish. Pour chicken mixture

over cream cheese. Top with dressing.

- Bake 15 minutes in the preheated oven, until hot and bubbly.



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