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Edition 11.13	Paul Parent Garden Club News	March 31, 2011
 <p data-bbox="571 495 852 521">Quotation of the Week:</p> <p data-bbox="363 528 935 577">"A gardener never leaves this earth; their garden will live forever." Thanks to Kathy for this quote!</p> <p data-bbox="288 752 995 797">Weed Free Garden Watering Blanket™</p> <p data-bbox="204 831 823 1003">The Weed Free Garden Watering Blanket™ offers a new approach to weed blocking and watering. It combines two labor and cost intensive steps into one. Now you can enjoy a virtually weed-free experience without herbicides. It's made with Rainweave, the first landscape fabric with built-in drip irrigation.</p> <ul data-bbox="236 1032 970 1218" style="list-style-type: none">• Water, Weed & Feed in 1 Step• Conserves over 75% on water usage• Blocks weeds without chemicals• Saves valuable time• Increases plant health• Lasts multiple seasons (5+ years uncovered or 20+ years if mulched) <p data-bbox="204 1245 986 1272">Click here to find out more about the Weed Free Garden Watering Blanket™.</p> <p data-bbox="204 1301 1018 1350">And click here to see pictures of Paul installing the Weed Free Garden Watering Blanket™!</p> <p data-bbox="213 1503 1066 1653">This spring I would love to have you add to your shade or part-shade garden a spectacular plant called the Exbury rhododendron. It is often listed with the azalea family because, like most of the azalea family, it loses all of its leaves during the winter months. I have often been told by Southern Gardeners that "it's a shame you live in the cold north because you miss out on so much tropical beauty." Well, just these plants alone will make up for all of your Southern beauties--the rhododendron Exbury hybrids. No, they will not grow down south; it's too hot for them.</p> <p data-bbox="213 1671 1054 1843">During May and June, look for clusters of flowers the same size or larger than the rhododendron will make, up to 8 to 12 inches in diameter. Each flower individually can be 2 to 3 inches in diameter and trumpet shaped. Also each flower cluster can contain 15 to 30 individual flowers. Poking out of the center of the flowers are unique cat-like whiskers, which are the pollen sack holders that in time will help make seeds in pods where the flowers once stood. Some of the varieties of these flowers have freckle-like spots on the upper part of the petals in deeper shades of the same color or complementing colors.</p> <p data-bbox="213 1861 1066 1962">You may say, "So what's the big deal with these flowers on this plant?" I will have to tell you that when the plant flowers, there are no leaves on the plant, just flowers. The Exbury hybrids will grow up to 6 to 8 to 10 feet tall and just as wide. Can you imagine a plant that has every branch covered with flowers, like a giant flower arrangement in your garden?</p> <p data-bbox="213 1980 1070 2123">The foliage is a medium green in color and resembles a rhododendron leaf in length and width but is not thick and glossy--it's almost papery. You will also notice a few signs of veins on the top of the leaf, and in the fall the foliage will turn shades of yellow to orange to red before falling from the plant. Once the foliage falls, the plant will take on a stiff look, like a candle stick or collection of upright-growing skeleton sticks with big fat buds up to one inch in diameter on the tip of every branch.</p>	<p data-bbox="1126 495 1347 521">Gifts for the Gardener</p> <p data-bbox="1086 539 1374 618">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p> <p data-bbox="1129 725 1342 752">Contact Information:</p> <p data-bbox="1086 775 1270 826">E-Mail: Click to contact us.</p> <p data-bbox="1086 848 1369 949">Telephone: (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p data-bbox="1086 972 1230 1023">Fax: (207) 985-6972</p> <p data-bbox="1086 1046 1321 1146">Address: Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p data-bbox="1086 1169 1385 1247">Phone Hours: Monday-Saturday 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p data-bbox="1110 1352 1362 1404">Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</p> <p data-bbox="1086 1426 1366 1478">Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</p> <p data-bbox="1129 1585 1342 1637">Have a Look Around Our Website:</p> <div data-bbox="1126 1653 1347 1787"></div> <p data-bbox="1086 1890 1374 1917">Subscribe to our newsletter!</p> <p data-bbox="1086 1939 1374 2013">Click here to subscribe, unsubscribe or change your address.</p>	

In the rhododendron and azalea family of plants, the flowers are normally red, white, purple-pink, pink, and lavender. Exbury Hybrids come in exciting shades like sunburst yellow, pumpkin orange, baby pink, powdery white, and brick red. These colors are unexpected in the Northeast at this time of the year, and with this shape of flower you will be blown away. Also, because of the time of the year, the weather is cool and the flowers last a long time on the plant.

These plants also grow in the shade and most of us have not seen these colors on plants growing in the shade before--these are sun colors, again unique. Plant Exbury hybrids under tall growing maples and oaks, not evergreens--and just under the foliage canopy or drip line. A bit of morning or late in the day sunshine will help to increase the size of the plant. Like other azaleas and rhododendrons, fertilize with acid based plant food in April/spring and again in August/fall to increase flower buds on the plant. Never spread limestone or wood ashes around the plant.

The plants prefer a soil that is rich in organic matter and animal manure when you plant them in the spring. A soil that is moist but not wet during the growing season will keep the plant growing well and produce many flower clusters. Bark mulch around the plant roots 2 to 3 inches deep will keep moisture in the soil and weed away from this plant.

When you visit your local nursery in the early spring, the plant is not exciting to look at, but choose a plant with good structure and many buds. If you wait for the plant to come to full bloom before purchasing it you will not find it in the nursery. Because of the unique colors gardeners pick them up before they come into full bloom. Once in your garden, this plant is like trying to eating potato chips, you cannot have just one--you will want more of the unique colors for your garden. One last thing: this plant is easy to grow! Enjoy.

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1.) It's time to uncover your rose bushes and remove the winter protection you put around them last fall. If you used soil, mulch or compost, just spread it around the plant for additional root protection when the heat of summer arrives and to help control weeds later.

2.) Its time to prune back your bush type roses and clean them of dead, broken, or weak branches. Cut them back to 18 to 24 inches from the ground, and be sure to remove all small shoots that developed on the plant; also remove all suckering branches that developed at the base of the plant. Where you pruned the plant, spray with Wilt-Pruf or Wilt Stop to seal in the moisture and help protect it from the cold spring winds.

3.) Climbing roses should also be cleaned and cut back to get ready for a more productive year. Remove all winter damage branches to the nearest crotch or dormant bud. Tie all branches to your fence or arbor and be sure that part of that branch is tied down and growing in a horizontal position. Horizontal-growing branches will encourage more branches to develop and that means more flowers.

4.) Removing all suckers that develop just below the graft will keep the plant more productive with flowers and eliminate excess foliage. Once the plant is cleaned, fertilize with a granular rose food like Dr. Earth Rose food with microbes.

5.) If you have potted roses growing in containers, now is the time to bring them out of the winter storage building like your garage or tool shed. Also any evergreens grown in containers that you store this way need to come out now so they can begin to develop naturally.

6.) The bird bath and your fountains can now be set up; just be sure to clean them well, and remove any green algae that might have formed during the winter. Once cleaned, be sure to rinse well to remove any cleaning product residue. Just the sound of running water will help cheer you up with this cold weather.

7.) Gazing balls will redirect the sunlight in your yard. Along with all your garden statuary, this will help to bring your garden alive even though not many plants have begun to develop yet.

8.) Bring out all your garden and patio containers like whiskey barrels, Earth Boxes, window boxes, and planters. While you have time, let's recondition the soil in them and prepare them for planting. Use this time wisely and then when you're ready to plant, your containers will be ready also. When your local garden center has pansies available, stick a few plants in them for a bit of color now. You can transplant the pansies to your garden later when you plant your containers with your summer flowers.

9.) If you have a fish pond or garden pool that has been turned off all winter long, let's clean out the winter debris and get the water clean and moving. Water movement at this time of the year will help get you moving and thinking of the plants around the water.

10.) Sweep your front steps, the walkways, the patio, the deck, and even the driveway. This will make you FEEL better and it's more fun that shoveling snow on those same areas. While you're cleaning, think about what you could do to these areas to make them more beautiful, like a container of flowers or vegetables or even plantings along them this spring.

11.) Check out your wooden fence and gates to see how they handled the winter; check for any broken or rotting post or rails. While the weather is cool, let's do some of the hard work so we can sit back this summer and relax. If you're going to paint, be sure to check about painting and outside temperatures, or your hard work could all peel off the fence if it's too cold now to paint.

12.) Look at your flag pole and inspect the rope for strength. Does the pole need to be painted? How about the gold ball on top--does it need a good shine? How about the flags-- do they need to be replaced or it could be time to add a new flag to your collection? Opening day is Saturday and

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no better time to get out your favorite team flag out--mine is "The Boston RED SOX." Go team!! If your American flag is worn and tattered, give it to your local Boy Scout troop and they will take care of it for you.

13.) If the ground can be worked, how about starting to edge your flower and garden beds. Garden beds look much better with a straight edge on them and it will make mowing along them much easier if you do it now, while you have time. If you have long beds, use string to make a straight line or (like me) you will cut the edge wrong. If you are removing large pieces of green grass in some areas while edging those beds save the grass and use it to fill in bare spots in your lawn.

14.) If you are going to use a lot of bark mulch this spring, it is much cheaper to purchase it by the yard or in bulk than by the bag. It will take nine 3 cubic foot bags of bark mulch to equal one yard of bulk mulch. Compare the price before you buy all those bags. One yard of bark mulch will cover an area 100 square feet (10' X10') three inches deep, or at 1.5" thick 10'X20'. If there is still bark mulch in the beds from last year just add an inch of new mulch to bring back the color. Year old bark mulch does not "go bad," so do not remove it.

15.) This is the BEST time to spread mulch on perennial beds or shrub beds that contain bulbs, as the plants are dormant and all you have to do is rake it in. Once the plants begin to develop you will have to do a lot of "hand work" and your labor will be much more time consuming.

16.) April traditionally brings us much rain, so get the rain barrel in place to collect the water for your garden later. I have a rain barrel and use it often during the heat of summer to water the containers on the front walkway and on the porch; it beats dragging out the hose every day.

17.) How about bringing out the patio furniture and getting the back deck or patio set up early? The nice days are coming and on the next nice Sunday morning, bring out the radio and a cup of coffee and listen to the garden show outside so you can see and plan what you have to do in your garden.

18.) Now is a good time to repair all that patio furniture or even paint it if necessary. If you need to replace cushions, measure them and post it on the refrigerator door and that way when they go on sale you will be ready to grab them. If the furniture needs to be replaced, it's better to know now than when you need it later; get ready for the sales yet to come.

19.) Now is also time to uncover and remove the winter protection from the hydrangeas. Do not prune them now but you can remove any branches that were damaged during the winter. You can add aluminum sulfate fertilizer around them to help increase the blue color intensity of the flower. Pruning is done when the buds begin to swell and become more visible.

20.) Have you noticed that the tool shed is now beginning to look empty and you now have room to move around in there? How about taking out the garden hose and attaching it to the faucet so it's ready to use? Maybe the kids will want to use it and wash the car for you. (You can hope!)

21.) Might want to look for the sprinkler and nozzle at the same time and see if they still work. Bring out the watering cans, and the watering wands for the hanging baskets.

22.) Take a big pad of paper and write down the names of all of your garden chemicals and organic products you have in your tool shed or garage. Leave a good inch of space between each product so you can write down what you use them for. If you have products and forgot what they are for or when to use them, let's take that list to the nursery to find out what you have and how to best use it. Also write down how much you have of each; that way you will know if you need more while you're out.

23.) If you have a brick, cobblestone, or concrete paver, walkway or patio, this is the perfect time to add additional stone dust to entirely fill in the cracks in between them; these have formed during the past winter. If you can fill these spaces with stone dust or sand you will have less of a weed problem this summer.

24.) If you want new birds in your bird houses, they must be cleaned each spring before they will be occupied. The more unique birds are fussier about where they will live and will not reside in unclean bird houses. If you often wonder why you have so many grackles in your bird houses, all they want is a roof over their heads.

25.) Tape this list on your tool shed wall and as you finish one of the things to do, cross it off the list. It's not all work when you garden and you must take time to enjoy what you have accomplished, so do as my Dad and I would often do: take a cold can of beer out of the refrigerator, sit in the garden, and toast to all you have done! Enjoy the moment; I am glad I did when I had my Dad in the garden with me!

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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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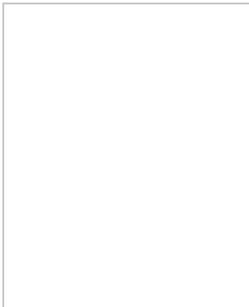


This Week's Question:

What are the names of the two roses that were the 2011 AARS Winners?

[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:

The White House hosts an annual White House Easter Egg Roll on the White House lawn each year. What year was the first *official* White House Easter Egg Roll held?

Last Week's Winner:

Gail Moretti

Last Week's Answer:

In 1878, President Hayes and his wife, Lucy, officially opened the White House grounds to the children of the area for egg rolling that Easter Monday.

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:

Baked Asparagus with Balsamic Butter



What You'll Need:

- 1 bunch fresh asparagus, trimmed
- Cooking spray
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce

- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

Step by Step:

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).
- Arrange the asparagus on a baking sheet.
- Coat with cooking spray, and season with salt and pepper.
- Bake asparagus 12 minutes in the preheated oven, or until tender.
- Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat.
- Remove from heat, and stir in soy sauce and balsamic vinegar.
- Pour over the baked asparagus to serve.



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