

From: Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>
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Edition 12.10	Paul Parent Garden Club News	March 8, 2012
 <p style="text-align: center;">FEATURED QUOTE : "Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed." ~Francis Bacon</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto 20px auto;"></div> <p style="text-align: center;">MAG-I-CAL by Jonathan Green</p> <p>Mag-I-Cal is a highly soluble form of calcium, which is readily available for plant uptake. One bag is equivalent to up to ten bags of pelletized limestone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rapidly raises soil pH--faster than lime• Provides calcium, essential for healthy lawns• Releases "tied-up" nutrients in the soil• Pellets are easy to spread, saving time and money• Use on lawns, new seedings, sod lawns & gardens• "Wakes up" beneficial micro-organisms• Inhibits moss growth• Used by professionals <p>For more information about Mag-I-Cal, visit the Jonathan Green website.</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 300px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto 20px auto;"></div> <p>If you live in an area of the country where spring is late to arrive and fall arrives early, then you need to plant snapdragons in your garden this year. You should sow your seeds right now, so they are ready for planting by the end of April into your garden. You can also purchase seedlings at the same time as pansies are available at your local garden center. When planted early, snapdragons will be in bloom in your garden before your warm season annuals like impatiens and marigolds begin flowering.</p> <p>Snapdragons do best in a cool climate like the Northeast and west to Oregon and Northern California. They are very tolerant of cold weather and often flower well into early November. Because of their love of cool weather, they will give you great fall color when you plant mums and flowering cabbage to fill in the holes of the fading summer flowers like your impatiens and geraniums. When I lived in southern Massachusetts, I would cover the plants with pine needles in late October, and the following spring more than half would have survived the winter in my garden.</p> <p>Snapdragons were found in southwestern Europe, growing as a wild pink flower in open sunny fields. Over the years, seed companies have developed many new hybrids of this plant and the work continues today to improve the color selection, flower size and flower numbers on the plant. Snapdragons grow 9 inches to 4 feet tall in your garden and will bush out 6 to 12 inches wide or more from spring to fall. If you live near the ocean or a lake where temperatures are always cooler than inland this is a must-have flower for your garden; the plant will also tolerate a bit of late in the day shade.</p> <p>Snapdragons love a fertile soil so the better you prepare it with animal manure, compost or seaweed kelp, the better the plant will grow for you. In the fall, blend your shredded leaves and pine needles into the garden to help add organic matter to the soil. Just push your lawn mower over your leaves to chop them up a bit before mixing with the soil. Go to the beach and pick up seaweed that washed up onto the beaches in September or October and add that to your garden soil. If you have woods behind your house, take your wheelbarrow and a shovel along with you and dig up some of the wonderful composted leaf mulch to add to your garden soil. All these things will help to better the soil in your gardens and help your plants grow better with less</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;">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>Regular Phone Hours: Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tell your friends about Paul! Send them a copy of Paul's latest newsletter.</p> <p>(Note: this will not subscribe them to the newsletter, nor retain their email - it will just send them a copy from you.)</p> <p>Your e-mail []</p> <p>Your name []</p> <p>Their e-mail []</p> <p>Their name []</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Send >>]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Where can I find Paul on</p>

fertilizer.

Snapdragons have wonderful dark green foliage that is oval with a slight point on the tip. Leaves grow 1 to 3 inches long and less than 1 inch wide, with a sunken vein running down the center on the leaf. The leaves grow alternately up the stem and almost look like they are growing in a whirl around the flower stem. Unlike most annuals, the foliage of the plant will tolerate frost once the plant has acclimated to the weather, so be sure to harden off your seedlings you're going to plant out in the garden properly before planting.

You can plant snapdragons two ways in the spring, pinched or un-pinched. If you set out the plant without pinching the tip of the plant, it will quickly grow tall and make a single large and tall flower stock filled with flowers in just a few weeks, depending on the age of the plant. When the flower stem fades remove it and the plant will quickly begin to develop many side shoots that in time will all make spikes of flowers and continue flowering all summer long.

Or at the time of planting, you can pinch back the tips of the stems to encourage side shoots to develop early. This will delay flowering by 2 to 3 weeks--but the plants will grow much bushier and produce many more flower stems to give your garden better color. As these flower stems fade, pinch them off and the plant will bush off again and continue to make additional flowers stems all summer long. I always pinch my plants and it really pays off with more flowers during the growing season.

Snapdragons love to be fertilized every 2 weeks during the growing season, and this will pay off with large and more flower spikes. So use Blooming and Rooting fertilizer from Ferti-lome or, if you're a busy gardener, apply Osmocote time-release fertilizer when planting and again in late July for endless flowers right up to November. I like to do both and my plants provide me with endless stems for cutting.

Snapdragons can be planted in flowerbeds, in borders and do very well in containers also. Because snapdragons grow vertically, they will help give your garden extra height--and they make a great accent flower for the garden. Each flower spike will last for several weeks in the garden and the flowers bloom from the bottom up and slowly open new flowers on top of the older ones, keeping the top of the flower spike in constant color.

Here are a few of the wonderful varieties to look for at your local garden center or seed packs to purchase:

'**Floral Carpet**' will grow 8 to 10 inches tall and 12 inches wide. Great for flower borders, window boxes rock gardens and containers. Comes in White, yellow, pink and red colors--and if you continually clean faded stems, the plant will not stop flowering for you all season long. 'Floral Carpet' also looks great when planted on top of a wall or when used as edging along a walkway.

'**Sonnet**' will grow 18 to 24 inches tall and looks great in mixed borders or large planters like whiskey barrels. Plants come in shades of reddish/pink, yellow/bronze, and white flowers; the plant stays bushy and full growing. Stems can be cut for small vase arrangements.

'**Bright Butterfly**' will grow 2 to 2.5 feet tall and is great for borders, in cut flower gardens, and looks wonderful when added to large perennial flowerbeds to keep color all season long. Flower colors come in shades of red, pink, bronze, yellow and white. The flowers are also more ruffled than the other varieties of snapdragons and look unique.

'**The Rocket**' will grow 2.5 to 3 feet tall--and more if you prepare your soil properly. Plants grow large and full--12 inches or more in diameter--and are very sturdy, but should be sheltered from strong winds because of the height of the flowers. The flowers come in shades of red, pink, bronze, yellow and white. Some of the plants will also have bronze to red stems and foliage for extra character. The best for tall-cutting flower stems. The plants will look wonderful in mixed borders, in perennial flower beds or up against a wall or fence to soften the surface behind them. 'Rockets' are my favorite variety, and I grow them every year in my garden.

One last thing: insect and disease problems are minimal and the plants are very easy to grow--even for beginners! Enjoy.

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Did you know that there are over 25 varieties of mint? But peppermint and spearmint are the most popular of all! Mints have been in gardens since gardening began, and their special taste, history and traditions make these plants a must for the herb gardener. Spearmint, for example, is native to the Mediterranean, and was introduced to the world by the Romans. Mint was found in Egyptian tombs dating back to 1000 BC and the Japanese people have been growing many varieties of mint for at least 2000 years. Mint was brought to America by the settlers as an additive to clean their homes and to help make them smell good as well as for cooking. As monks traveled the new lands to spread the word of the Lord, mint was also planted around their new missions to use as a scent for their bath water and cooking. In the fourteenth century, mint was used as whitening for your teeth. Today you have mint-flavored toothpaste and mouthwash for a fresh breath.

In Greek mythology, it is said that two strangers were walking through the countryside and were being ignored by all. An elderly couple took pity on the tired looking travelers and invited them into their home for a good meal. They cleaned their dining table with mint leaves to freshen the table and cooked them a meal. The couple was rewarded by the strangers, as their home was turned into a beautiful temple. The strangers were the gods Hermes and Zeus...and from that day on, mint became the "hospitality plant."

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Mint was used by the Greeks in their temples and in sacred ceremonies, also for food preparation for great celebrations. Today in the great "sport of kings," the greatest horse race in the world, the Kentucky Derby, is celebrated with the mint julep as a way to commemorate the event--hospitality at its best. Now think how many types of candy, gum, ice cream, desserts and foods are eaten with some form of mint flavor?

Mint is grown from seed or by dividing established plants to make new ones. Seed-grown plants do not have the same type of quality flavor as the same variety grown from division, so divide your plants for more flavor. You can divide your plants from early spring right through the growing season, and even in the fall when all the foliage has died back and the plant has gone dormant. Mint will grow best in a garden with a little bit of shade, unless you are able to water the garden often during the hot days of summer. In cooler climates like the Northeast they will do well in sun all day long. I recommend that you use Soil Moist Granules when planting if your soil is on the sandy side or your town has water bans every summer.

Your soil should be as rich as possible, so condition the garden before planting with animal manure, compost, or seaweed kelp. Mint is a perennial and will return every spring so condition the soil properly the first time--it's easier than digging up the plant and starting over the following spring. Mint can also be easily grown in containers that are 12 inches or larger in diameter on patios or decks for people with limited garden space or no garden at all.

Fertilize your plants with an organic fertilizer like Espoma Vegetable Garden-tone or Dr. Earth Organic Vegetable Garden food with Pro-biotic in the spring time. These plants are very strong and one feeding in the spring is all that is needed with good soils. The most important need to this plant is water; water will determine the size of the plant, the quality of the flavor in the foliage, and the plant's ability to spread and grow in your garden.

The foliage will vary from variety to variety but leaves are oval in shape with a blunt tip on the end. The leaves will grow 1 to 2 inches long and about one inch wide. Some mint plants will be all green; but some will have a second color like white, red, yellow, or even purple streaks in the leaves--and even the stems. Some varieties are smooth and shiny while others are dull and almost hairy. Each plant is unique and each plant has its own wonderful scent from the oils in the plant. Just crush or roll a leaf with your fingers and smell before purchasing the plant, that way you know what you're getting for your garden.

All mint plants have wonderful white, lavender to lilac-pink flower clusters on the tip of the branches during mid to late summer. When mint is in flower in your garden you can expect to see butterflies and bees of all types in the garden, a real treat.

Water mint early in the morning to prevent possible disease problems and keep plants away for automatic watering systems in your lawn. Mint rust can be a problem on the leaves and it is best to remove any spotted foliage if it should develop on the plant. If this is a real problem in your garden, do this: in the fall when the plant has died back to the ground and the foliage has dried up, burn the foliage to the ground; this will kill all the spores in the ground and sterilize the soil at the same time.

Mint IS aggressive and, if not supervised, it will take over your garden in just a few years and choke out everything growing around it. Each spring, or in the fall, use your garden spade or shovel and cut around the plant and remove what you do not want. Give it away to friends or--better still--plant it in an area where other plants have had problems growing in the past and watch it quickly take over and fill in those sore spots around your yard. It's also great for erosion control on sloping hillsides to prevent washouts caused by heavy rainfall.

Here is what I do in my garden to control the problem. I take a 5 gallon bucket and cut off the bottom. Now dig a hole in your garden and place the bucket in it so 3 inches of the bucket is sticking out of the garden. Fill the bucket with the soil to match the rest of the garden but leave the 3-inch lip empty and plant the mint plant in the center. The 3-inch lip that is sticking out of the ground will prevent runner stems from spreading all over the garden and the sides of the bucket underground will prevent roots from spreading underground and coming up everywhere. This is the best way to control the size of this plant and prevent it from taking over.

This spring visit your local garden center and look for other flavors of mint like Pineapple, Ginger, Apple, Lemon, Chocolate, Corsican, Moroccan, and even Orange--to name a few. When it's time for the big Derby and you cannot be there to see the race, make your own fresh Mint Julep for the garden. Enjoy!

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A Customized Gardening Tour of England and the 2012 Chelsea Flower Show

Paul Parent hosts a tour that includes the Wisley Gardens, the Chelsea Flower Show, Tower of London, Roman Baths & Pump Room, Riverford Organic Farm, Garden House, Rosemoor Gardens, Lost Gardens of Heligan, Village of Mevagissey, Stonehenge, the Wilton House Garden Centre and more.

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This Week's Question

Botanically speaking, which of the following doesn't fit in?

- A. Chili Pepper
- B. Cucumber
- C. Eggplant
- D. Tomatillo
- E. Tomato

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
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Last Week's Question:

If I had a gean (rhymes with green) growing in my yard, what kind of fruit tree would it be?

Last Week's Winner:

Phyllis Groen

Last Week's Answer:

Wild cherry or sweet cherry (*Prunus avium*)

Last Week's Prize:

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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!



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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Featured Recipe: Crock Pot Corned Beef and Cabbage

- 1 (3 to 4 lb.) corned beef brisket
- 1 large head cabbage quartered and rough chopped
- 8 peppercorns
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 4-5 parsnips
- 1-2 turnips
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 pound carrots, peeled
- 6 large potatoes
- 1 stalk celery, chopped thin
- 3 whole cloves, sliced lengthwise
- 1/2 tsp. Old Bay seasoning
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper, ground

Step by Step:

- Wash brisket. Using a small sharp knife, cut tiny X slits in the meat and insert garlic clove slices.
- Place the meat in a large crock pot and cover with water. Add bay leaves, peppercorns, Old Bay, 2 whole carrots and sliced celery.
- Heat on high for 30 minutes. Check to be sure meat has reached 160° (if not, cook on high a bit longer). Then skim off the foam and set the heat to low.
- Quarter the cabbage, peel potatoes, carrots, turnips and parsnips. Slice uncooked vegetables into 2 inch chunks.
- Add uncooked vegetables and continue to cook on low for 3 hours, or until vegetables are tender. Remove bay leaves.
- Drain and serve with honey dijon mustard, or a mustard less spicy if desired.



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