

**From:** Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 22, 2012 4:28 PM  
**To:** rickmorin@earthlink.net  
**Subject:** Paul Parent Garden Club News - March 22, 2012

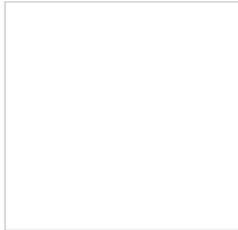
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Edition 12.12	Paul Parent Garden Club News	March 22, 2012
	<p><b>FEATURED QUOTE :</b></p> <p>"I appreciate the misunderstanding I have had with Nature over my perennial border. I think it is a flower garden; she thinks it is a meadow lacking grass, and tries to correct the error." ~Sara Stein, <i>My Weeds</i>, 1988</p>	<p><b>Gifts for the Gardener</b></p> <p><a href="#">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</a></p>
	<p><input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p>
<p><b>Bonide Crabgrass Preventor Phase 1</b></p>		<p><b>E-Mail:</b> <a href="#">Click to contact us.</a></p>
<p>Bonide Crabgrass Preventor Phase 1 prevents crabgrass and other grassy weeds for up to 5 months. Contains premium , turf grade, slow release fertilizer and non-staining iron for deep greening plus our exclusive VigorX micronutrient package for premium performance.</p>	<p><input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>Telephone:</b> (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p>
<p><b>Where to use:</b> This product is a selective preemergence herbicide that controls grasses and broadleaf weeds in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Established Turf Grasses (excluding golf course putting greens) and Lawns</li><li>• Landscape Ornamentals</li><li>• Established perennials and wildflower plantings</li></ul>	<p><input type="text"/></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>Regular Phone Hours:</b> Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p>
		<p><b>Tell your friends about Paul! Send them a copy of Paul's latest newsletter.</b></p>
<p><input type="text"/></p>		
<p>It's now spring--and we should be thinking about what to plant in our window boxes, containers and garden for endless color all season long. Today, let me tell you about the best foliage plants for color, as flowers are not needed when you use these plants. Foliage can become the "Star" of your garden. So this spring when you plan your garden, consider: leaf texture, foliage colors, leaf and stem shape, plant character, growth habits, foliage contrasts and the plants' ability to change things around during the season. Look at the plants I have selected for your inspection and try a few of these plants on your property--and you too will become a believer that foliage is more important than the flowers the plants produce.</p>	<p><input type="text"/></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><b>#1 Persian Shield (<i>Strobilanthes dyeranus</i>)</b> This one was new to me last year, and I fell in love with it because of the bold and brilliant metallic purple foliage. The plant will grow 3 to 4 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide when mature, but if you keep pinching the taller growing branches back, it will reward you with many new side shoots that have darker purple foliage, and the plant will stay more compact. The leaves will grow 4 to 7 inches long, 2 to 3 inches wide and are oval with a wonderful point to them. The edge of the leaf has small teeth on it and when young these teeth they are purple but mature to green, giving the leaf additional color.</p>	<p><input type="text"/></p>	<p>Your e-mail [    ] Your name [    ] Their e-mail [    ] Their name [    ]</p> <p>[Send &gt;&gt;]</p>
<p>The young foliage begins all deep purple with sunken veins that give the leaf the appearance of a feather. As the leaf mature and grows larger, the color will gradually fade to silvery or iridescent purple and the veins will change to green like the teeth on the edge of the leaf. During the heat of summer, your plant will have layers of deep purple new growth, silvery purple in the middle and silvery purple with green veins and leaf edge on the base of the plant. For the best color, keep the plant in a sunny location.</p>		<p><b>Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here to find Paul Parent</a></p>
<p>Your plants will grow best a rich potting soil that has been conditioned with compost and</p>		

animal manure--and your soil should also be well drained at all times. Fertilize often with a liquid plant fertilizer like Ferti-lome Blooming and Rooting or Miracle-Gro. If growing in containers or sandy garden soil use Soil moist granules when planting to help the soils retain moisture. In the summer, small blue flowers will form but they are of little interest. One last thing--the underside of the foliage stays bright purple. In the fall take a few tip cuttings--they root easily--and grow them to use as houseplants; they will do well indoors on a sunny window during the winter months.

**#2 Pennisetum**

Red Leaf Fountain Grass: This is a wonderful annual grass with foliage that comes in several shades of burgundy to purple-red. The plant produces an endless supply of dark spiky foliage. The foliage is narrow--under 1/2 inch wide-- and glossy. The purple-red foliage will grow 1 to 3 feet tall, depending on the variety you select, with a rounded tip on the end of the blade of grass. The foliage will grow in a clump and has a unique upright growing habit. As if this was not enough to turn your head, the plant will also produce many long, arching, birthday candle-like flower spikes that are fuzzy and light tan in color but blushed with pink and burgundy. The foliage is so shiny it looks like it was sprayed with wax. When it rains or you water the plant, the water will bead- up on the leaf like peas in a pod, it's also just beautiful early in the morning with the morning dew. The unique foliage looks striking when poking out of green foliage in a mixed plant container.

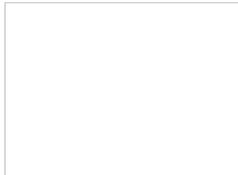


Another member of the Pennisetum grass family you will love is the purple millet called 'Purple Majesty.' This unique plant will grow as tall as 3 to 4 feet high, and the foliage resembles a miniature corn plant--not grass. The foliage will grow wider--1 to 2 inches wide and 6 to 12 inches on strong stems that develop as a clump at the base of the plant. Each stem can and will produce several leaves on it and both the stem and the leaves are rich dark purple red in color. The leaves are thin and wavy looking; they also grow narrower and develop a sharp point on their tips. The millet variety is well known for the large cattail-like flower spikes that are soft, fluffy and bright purple-red early on. As the spike matures, it will begin to turn a creamy tan color from the top working its way down the spike. Soon it will be covered with small, round, shiny seeds that are bright purple-red like the flower, making additional contrast.

Plant either type in a soil that has been conditioned with compost or animal manure. They love a full sun location in the garden or in a container that is well drained and they will both tolerate dry soil but will thrive in a moist soil. If plants receive some shade, some foliage will develop green areas on the plant rather than being all colored. Soil Moist granules help keep plants active in sandy soil or in containers when water becomes scarce. Both types are annual and cannot be brought into the house for the winter months and replanted the following spring. Start new plants from seed during February or March indoors.

**#3 Sweet Potato Vine (*Ipomoea batatas*)**

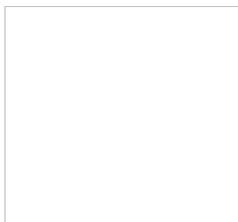
This is a vigorous trailing vine that is great for containers or as a border plant for your garden. In the past few years, this plant has changed a great deal and now comes in several colors such as lime green, purple, red, black and variegated colors. It also now comes in several leaf shapes--from the early heart shaped leaf to foliage that is deeply lobed (like the 'Lace' cultivars) or shaped like the ace of spades; some even have varieties with holes in the foliage. Two years ago, I saw this plant used as an annual ground cover in an open area between perennial gardens. Because the plant has the ability to root as it touches the ground, it grew very large leaves--almost a foot in diameter. This bed had both lime green and deep purple plants alternating in it creating a large checkerboard pattern on the ground.



Sweet potato vine will give you the best colored foliage in full sun but it will grow in partial shade, although the leaf color will be more subdued and the plant will not grow as vigorously. Plants prefer a rich soil conditioned with compost or animal manure and if your soil is sandy or your planting in container use Soil Moist Granules to help retain moisture around the roots during periods of hot dry weather. When you set out your plants pinch back every new shoot to the next leaf and watch the plant quickly develop additional stems. This will help fill your containers with colorful foliage and create many new cascading shoots that will quickly run on the ground. Sweet potato vine can grow stems up to 10 feet long if fertilized regularly with Miracle-Gro or Fertilome Rooting and Blooming plant food. When you're planting your containers this year, add the new Bio-Tone fertilizer before planting your container to encourage faster root development. In the fall you can take tip cuttings easily. This plant will do very well as a houseplant during the winter for you indoors. It grows like a large-leaf ivy, with lots of color both indoors and outside. Great in window boxes in place of vinca vine, for a change.

**#4 Silver Falls (*Dichondra argentea*)**

Now, this is a plant I found 3 years ago and have not looked back ever since. The label said it would cascade quickly and spread far and wide in your container, or to use it as an annual ground cover to cascade over a stone wall for great color. The greenhouse I purchased it at also called it silver nickel vine, and I just loved the small rounded foliage. The plant is all silvery white to gray and velvety soft to the touch, even the stems. The foliage is rounded to kidney shaped and reminded me of ground ivy and quick-growing lawn weed. I planted some in a window box and in a whiskey barrel and the vines quickly grew 3 to 6 feet long over the summer months. When I planted the plants I cut back every tip on the vines to encourage new growth and, believe me, it quickly multiplied with every vine that I cut.



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Once the plants hit the ground they rooted and even more new shoots developed from the vine--making it even more beautiful and thicker. The thing I like best about this plant is that it was not aggressive in the containers and did not choke out other plants growing near it. It also sent out runners throughout the container and came out everywhere, adding color to the container where it was not expected. I also had one plant left over when the planting was done so I added it to a hanging basket filled with dark leaf begonias and it made the hanging basket "POP" with that silvery foliage. I did see a few small silvery flowers but they were barely noticeable.

Plant this wonderful vine in a sunny location or some of the leaves will turn gray green, still nice, but not that "Eye Popping" white silver. It loves a well-drained soil; the plant cannot sit in a saucer of water, ever. The better you condition the soil, the better the plant will grow, so use compost or animal manure. If you like dusty miller, you will like this plant even better because of the color, the ability to cascade in containers and over stone walls--plus, I never saw a bug or disease problem with it all year. Also, once it roots while growing on the ground, cut it from the mother, dig it up and pot into a container to make a new plant for the house for the winter months. The color is unusual, it's delicate looking and your fellow gardeners will be envious of you because they won't have it.

#### #5 Bloodleaf Plant ( *Iresine herbstii* ):

This old-fashioned plant is not used much today because of all the new coleus but you should look it over one more time. Grow it in a container of mixed plants or in your garden for a mass of colorful foliage. The foliage will draw your friends to it to take a closer look at it because of the unique colors. This is a plant known for the markings on the foliage; they are bright and rich and the colors are deep and interesting to look at. The plant looks like a coleus a bit--but with much different leaves and unusual stems. The leaves are oval with a pointed tip to them, 1 to 3 inches long and 1 to 2 inches wide. These wonderful leaves are deep purple with reddish to pink veined covering the leaf like a spider web when young. The veins on the leaves almost look like they have blood running through them at times, and the stems and foliage stand out with any type of mixed container. As the plant matures, the colors change to more pink and red with some purple and green veins.

The plant will grow 2 to 3 feet tall and just as wide, so pinch it at a leaf to control the size you want in the garden or container. This plant loves the sun in the Northeast where summers are not very hot and will do well near the lake or in a seaside planting with cool breezes. It will also do well in partial shade late in the day. In hot sunshine all day, the colors will bleach out. Plant in a conditioned soil with lots of compost and animal manure added before planting. Soil must be well drained so avoid overwatering plants or they will rot and fall over easily. You can take cuttings at any time and with a quick dip in rooting powder you can easily start new plants quickly in a rich soil like the new Black Gold Potting soil that has been conditioned with compost already. They make wonderful houseplants for any time of the year and are great plants for beginners. This is just a nice plant with great color for your garden or containers.

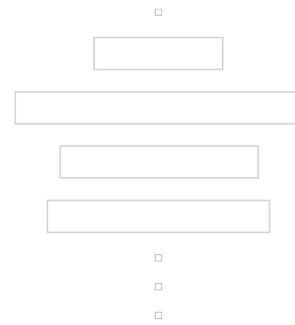
#### #6 Red Leaf Castor Bean ( *Ricinus communis* ):

I first grew this plant when I was 5 years old--and that was a long time ago now--and I still grow it every now and then in the garden. Two years ago, I planted a few seeds and gave the plant lots of room in the garden to grow and it became the one plant everyone talked about at the garden tour at the house. The garden tour is again this year and I will grow it again to help give my garden a bit of a tropical appearance. This is an annual plant in the Northeast. It will catch your eye because it grows so fast and large in such a short time. The plant has a thick stem and if you can plant 3 seedlings 18 inches apart in a triangle, you will create a plant that will resemble a tropical shrub in your garden and have everyone asking, "what is that plant?" Or plant them singly here and there in your garden as an accent color plant and to add some unusual foliage.

The plant grows upright and bushy--up to 5 to 7 feet tall if you can plant it in a well-conditioned soil. The more compost and animal manure you add to the garden, the larger the plant will grow and the bigger the leaves will become. This is a wonderful plant to place in a garden where you spend time during the summer months outside--like a on a deck, on the patio or near a swimming pool. Great conversation plant, great tropical like foliage, great foliage color, some flowers--and the plant does make **very** unusual looking seed pods. Just one word of advice: if you have young children, the plant is poisonous--and the seeds are deadly--so think about it before planting unless everyone is all grown up. The leaves of the plant are lobed like a Japanese maple leaf but much bigger, and when they first form on the plant, they are shiny--almost glossy. Also, the leaf stems and the plant stems are red and shiny.

Also unusual about this plant is that it has both male and female flowers. The female flowers are pink and the male flowers are cream colored. This is unusual for plants, so when your gardening friends come to your garden let's quiz them on this! Good gardening points for you! The seed pods resemble a horse chestnut pod (only more so); when they dry, you can collect the seeds for next year's plants. Plant seeds in a full sun area of the garden or in a large container like a whiskey barrel if the container is somewhat protected from the wind. If you're pushing the plant to grow big and tall plant near a fence or trellis so you can tie it up and prevent the strong wind from knocking it over during a storm.

Soak the seeds overnight before planting (the seed covering is very thick) to help speed germination. If you can start the seeds indoors about a month before the planting season outside, it will give you a big jump on the growing season. Start a couple of seeds in a 6 to 8 inch pot together to give the plant more body once in the garden. If you have sensitive skin,



use gardening gloves when you handle the plant as it may irritate you, I have no problem with this plant that way; just a warning. This plant also comes in green and copper colored foliage if you don't like red plants.

This year, think outside of the box and try something different in your garden and containers. Just in case you would like some of these plants this spring and your favorite greenhouse does not carry them, I found all these plants at Vermont Transplants in Arundel, Maine. Give them a call, they have even more unusual plants for your garden. Enjoy!

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Spring is here, and that means it's time for you to get out of the house and back in the yard. The seed catalogs are everywhere, gardening magazines are now flooding the book stands, and the birds are returning to your yards--so let's get moving. Take advantage of the warmer than normal weather and let's clean up the yard, prepare the soil for planting and begin planting early spring flowers like pansies, violets and Johnny jump ups.

It's also time to work on the lawn and get rid of the moss growing there. If you're using the old fashioned powdered limestone, be sure to open up your spreader all the way to do the job properly. This will give you the proper rate of 50 pounds per 1000 sq. ft. of lawn for heavy moss. You can cut the rate to 50 pounds per 2000 sq. ft. if moss is visible but not a problem yet. So empty the trunk of the car and head to the garden center for 10 to 20 50-pound bags of lime for your half acre of grass. Moss could also be a sign of a clay soil, and if that is the case, pick up a bottle of Liquid Gypsum from Soil Logic and spray it on the grass where moss is visible to break up the clay in the soil, improve the drainage and control the moss.

If the moss is like a carpet, rake it up with your steel grading rake and dispose of it now and then add grass seed in those areas later to fill in the holes. If moss is visible, you can also purchase a moss killer and burn it out quickly without hurting the existing grass--but you will still need to add lime to sweeten the soil to prevent regrowth later so you won't have to look at the moss during the summer. If you have a large area to do and a garden where you need to treat the soil also, I would suggest that you use the Jonathan Green Magic-Cal, as one bag will treat up to 10,000 sq. ft. and give you results faster than traditional ground limestone; it's also lighter to handle and less work for you.

Apply lime or Magic-Cal at the recommended rate for all your flower and vegetable gardens. Shrubs like lilacs, clematis, and pink hydrangea love lime, so be sure to give them a bit extra to promote good foliage growth and flowers later. If you have shrubs and flowering trees that are not flowering well, give them a bit of lime to help sweeten the soil and make the fertilizer you will apply work better around the plants. Even rhododendrons, azaleas and mountain laurel will improve their flower production with occasional applications of lime products.

If you have blue hydrangea and blueberries, it is also time to add a soil conditioner called aluminum sulfate to make the soil more acidic. This is the opposite of what liming the soil does, as these plants prefer an acidic soil to grow in; this will increase the flowers on the blueberry for more berries and you'll have brighter flower colors on the hydrangea.

Every garden center is now having a sale on Scotts' Four Step lawn Care Fertilizer Program, so taking advantage of it and it will save you a lot of money even if you have a small lawn. Ask the salesperson at the store to explain the time to apply each of the steps and what to look for. Right now is the best and MOST effective time to control crabgrass in your lawn, especially if you had crabgrass in your lawn last year. Each plant you had last year is able to produce up to 5000 seeds--so if you had a problem last year, it could be much worse this year. If you're controlling crabgrass with a traditional or organic product this year, remember to get it down early and be sure to water it in to dissolve the product to create the protective barrier on top of the soil to prevent seed germination. This first step will also fertilize the grass and help fill in the holes left in the lawn by the dead crabgrass plants from last year. Thick lawns do not have crabgrass problems so if you did not have crabgrass last year, feed your lawn to prevent problems this year.

Newly planted shrubs and trees from last year should now be fertilized now with Bio-Tone to continue the root development process so the plant can be ready for a possible hot and dry summer. Remember what this winter has been like--the summer could be a hot and dry one, so prepare now just in case. Established plants should be fertilized with the proper fertilizer also for evergreens use Holly-Tone or Dr. Earth Evergreen fertilizer with Pro biotic. If you have deciduous or leafless plants, use Espoma Plant-tone or Dr. Earth Shrub and Tree fertilizer with Pro Biotic now. Feeding at this time of the year stimulates the plant to grow while there is a good supply of moisture in the ground; remember, "April Showers bring May flowers." While the sap is moving up the tree, your fertilizer applied now can also move up the tree or shrub more easily for a uniform growth; it won't just sit at the bottom of the plant.

Clean up your perennial flower beds now, fertilize, lime and apply your bark mulch or compost before the plants begin to grow. It will save you time and prevent you from damaging newly sprouting shoots. When Spring Training finishes--and your favorite baseball team begins to play baseball for real--is the right time to prune back your roses; not before--especially in the northern part of the country--but you can feed and lime them now.

Your fruit trees, berry plants, rosebushes, perennial beds and evergreen shrubs should now be sprayed with All Season Oil and Copper Fungicide to kill overwintering insects and disease spores on your plants. Be sure to clean around the plants and remove all of last year's foliage on the ground, as it does contain these problems; spray the structure the plants are

growing on too. Entomologists are predicting a real bad year for insects this year due to the mild winter. The lack of real prolonged cold weather along with no frost in the ground could give us many problems with insects and disease in the coming weeks, so stay on top of problems as they develop in your garden.

Now is also the time to prune your deciduous non flowering plants like privet hedges, burning bush, barberry and privacy hedges--just to name a few. Also your non flowering evergreens like boxwood, holly, ilex, yews and junipers again just to name a few. While you're pruning your Canadian hemlock, check them over real well for small white growths that look like cotton on the underside of the needle, near the tips of the branches. If you see this, treat your plant "NOW" with systemic tree and shrub insecticide so the upward movement of the sap will take the product to the top of the tree and protect the entire plant for the entire year. If you have ash trees or large leaf trees on your property, look at the trunk of the tree for possible holes in them about the size of a pencil. Those could be a real problem that is easily controlled now--with the same product. Longhorn beetles or ash borers are a real problem all over New England now--and the warm winter did not help.

One last bug that is getting ready to create a problem--especially on Cape Cod, Rhode Island, and south of Boston--is the winter moth; it would be a great idea to spray your leaf trees with All Season Oil NOW to kill off some of the overwintering eggs on the trees. ***For detailed information concerning the biology and management of Winter Moth, see the University of Mass. Extension Program's [Winter Moth Identification & Management](#) and [Winter Moth Overview](#) fact sheets.***

Have a wonderful week in the garden, visit your favorite nursery, buy some pansies for planting and keep smiling--winter is over!

Paul

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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.

[Click here for details.](#)



### This Week's Question

The seeds are deadly, containing a poison known as ricin; even a few can kill you. However, the seeds are also the source of a number of products, including medical products. What is the common name of this plant?

- A. Angel's Trumpet
- B. Belladonna
- C. Castor Bean
- D. Foxglove
- E. Mandrake

**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

F.

For more information, [see the Espoma site.](#)

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**Last Week's Question:**

If you kiss the Blarney Stone in Ireland, what talent are you supposed to acquire?

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

**Last Week's Winner:**

David Zinszer

**Last Week's Answer:**

The gift of gab (or eloquence in speech).

**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!

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: Slow Cooker Beef Stew

### What You'll Need:

- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 can beef broth
- 1/2 cup red wine or water
- 2 lbs. beef for stew, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 can (14-1/2 oz.) diced Italian-style tomatoes
- 3 large carrots, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 tsp. Italian seasoning, crushed
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 cans (16 oz. each) white kidney beans (cannellini), drained
- 

### Directions:

- Mix tomato soup, broth, wine (or water), beef, tomatoes, carrots, Italian seasoning and garlic in a 3-1/2 quart slow cooker.
- Cover and cook on low for 8 to 9 hours (or 4 to 5 hours on high).
- Stir in beans. Turn heat to high and cook for 10 minutes.

Yield: 6 servings



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