

From: Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>
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Edition 12.13	Paul Parent Garden Club News	March 29, 2012
	<p>FEATURED QUOTE : "Plants give us oxygen for the lungs and for the soul." ~Linda Solegato</p>	<p>Gifts for the Gardener Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p>
<p><input type="text"/></p>		<p>Contact Information:</p>
<h2>The GrowPoint Garden Water Saver</h2>		<p>E-Mail: Click to contact us.</p>
<p>The GrowPoint Garden Water Saver puts water where it belongs...at the roots of your plants.</p>	<p><input type="text"/></p>	<p>Telephone: (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helps slow the growth of weeds• Slows water runoff time, especially on side hills• Dispenses water and fertilizer directly to the root system• Directs roots to grow deep into the ground• Prevents cutworms by blocking access to tender seedlings and stems• REDUCES water and fertilizer use• GrowPoint allows you to grow your own organic vegetables• Conserve water by only watering your plants and not the weeds• Use fewer pesticides• GrowPoint is great for the environment! It prevents fertilizer and pesticides from running off in our lakes, rivers and streams.• Made from RECYCLED plastics in the USA	<p><input type="text"/></p>	<p>Fax: (207) 985-6972</p>
<p>For more information (and a video showing how it works), visit the GrowPoint website.</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>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><input type="text"/></p>		<p>Your e-mail []</p>
<p>In a little over 4 weeks from today, you will be planting your vegetable garden with your summer plants--and one of the most productive summer vegetables is the summer squash. The summer squash will produce more fresh vegetables per square foot than most other vegetables in your garden. Heat will stimulate the plant to become more productive, so keep this in mind when you water and fertilize your garden plants. When Mother Nature is providing the heat and you provide your plants with regular waterings and feeding, your plants will produce nonstop.</p>		<p>Your name []</p> <p>Their e-mail []</p> <p>Their name []</p>
<p>When you see a female flower in bloom on the plant, your summer squash will be ready for picking in just 4 to 8 days. Summer squash will grow rapidly, so check the plants every day or two for a squash that has a 2-inch diameter and has grown from 6 to 8 inches long. Squashes that are thicker and longer will develop a thick and tough skin, along with large seeds inside the vegetable that detract from the mild flavor of the squash. If this happens, pick the squash quickly, split the squash in two the long way, dig out the seeds and dispose of them; you're now ready to stuff the squash with other chopped vegetables, bread crumbs, fresh herbs, olive oil and cook for a great treat.</p>		<p>[Send >>]</p>
<p>If they get way too big, toss them into your compost pile for their moisture and the nutritional value to the compost you're making. Fruit quality will decline if the fruit becomes too large. If you allow your squash to grow large, it will also prevent the plant from making additional fruit until the seeds inside the large squash have matured. The job of the plant is to make seeds for</p>		<p>Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings? Click here to find Paul Parent</p>

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The bay leaf was much respected in Roman times, as it reflected the roots of the family. The Latin name means "praise" and "renowned." The bay leaf crown became the symbol of excellence for poets and their writings; for the athlete a crown of laurel leaves was a symbol of glory and wisdom during tournaments. The word laureate means, "crowned with laurels"-- bay leaves. The title "Poet Laureate" is the mark of an excellent poet. Even today, a wreath of bay leaves is still placed on the head of the winning athlete after a major sporting event.

The bay leaf plant was dedicated to the Greek god Apollo, the god of music, healing, truth, and light. The bay leaf was sacred to him, and his temple had its roof covered entirely with bay leaves to protect it against disease, witchcraft and lightning. Apollo's son Asclepius, the Greek god of Medicine, considered this plant a powerful antiseptic to guard against disease, especially the plague. During the 17th century, every home in Europe had a plant or branches of bay leaves in it, to protect against witches, the devil, and the damage caused by a thunder and lightning storm.

Also during Roman times, a wreath of bay leaves was thought to protect a person against lightning. Now you know why you see so many pictures of Roman emperors with bay leaf wreaths on their head--it was to prevent the gods from striking them dead with a lightning bolt for their bad deeds. During the holidays, it was customary to garnish the head of a boar with a wreath of bay leaves as a centerpiece during the Yuletide feast...and you thought it was just an herb for flavoring pasta!

Bay leaf is a wonderful evergreen plant that can be grown as a shrub or shaped into a small tree as a potted plant. Because it is native to Europe, it is not winter hardy for most of us in the Northeast. It does make a wonderful container plant and does very well outside during the summer months. The foliage is dark green, shiny and oval. Each leaf will grow 2 to 3 inches long and 1 inch wide. The tip of the leaf will form into a point; the edges of the leaf are a bit wavy and pale yellow. The center of the leaf midrib and the veins running off of it also have a yellow tinge to them, making them very noticeable; this gives the plant much character. These veins are also raised--when you rub the leaf, you will feel them.

The plant will flower in the spring, making small creamy-yellow flower clusters, like tight rounded buds. If the bees do their job, small purple-black berry clusters will form on the plant during the summer months. As the flowers begin to fade on the plant, new growth will begin to develop on the tip of every branch. Usually 3 to 5 new shoots will form to help keep the plant thick and bushy.

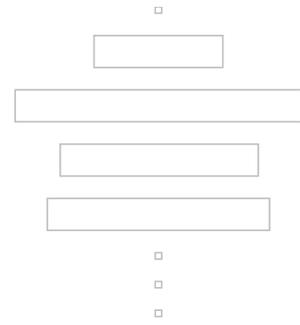
The new growth starts as yellow leaves with red veins and leaf edges, but these quickly darken as the leaves mature. The new stems are also red in color when young and darken to a rich brown when mature. Expect up to 6 inches of new growth each spring if the plant is well cared for and growing in a large container; pot-bound plants do not grow as quickly and can become almost stunted. When the new growth is developing on the plant, keep the plant indoors as frost or cold weather and wind can and will damage the new growth easily. New growth damage will resemble foliage that has been scorched by the sun; it will turn gray.

Bay leaf will grow best in a soil that is rich and fertile, so be sure to use a soil designed for potted plants like the Black Gold Potting soil--never your garden soil. The better the soil is, the better the plant will grow for you. Because you're eventually going to use these leaves for cooking, be sure your soil is OMRI certified as organic and does not contain waste products in it. This is why I am suggesting you use Black Gold Potting soils as they are all certified organic and registered with OMRI as such. Your soil should also be well-drained. When you put the plant outside for the summer months, put pots directly on the ground, deck or patio without a saucer under them. That way if you get a lot of rain and you're away from the house for a few days, the rainwater can drain freely without being trapped in the saucer and hurting the roots of the plant.

When you place this plant outside, say to yourself, this is a Mediterranean-type plant, and think sunny with a sheltered location from the wind. Plants can go outside when the threat of frost is over (mid-May if you live in New England and can stay out doors until the temperatures begin to drop to freezing, about the time the kids go back to school in September. While outside fertilize with Osmocote fertilizer pellets every 3 months or every other week with a liquid like Blooming and Rooting plant food from Fertilome. Keep the soil moist during the summer--especially during periods of high heat--but not wet.

As the plant grows in size, check the roots every spring. If the soil ball is covered with roots, it's time to transplant to a larger size pot--usually 2 inches larger each time. You can use clay or plastic pots when re-potting--it does not matter--but make sure there are drainage holes in the bottom of the pot. I like clay pots because if you tend to overwater your plants the clay pot is porous and moisture will escape through the sides of the pot preventing overwatering problems.

If your plant is growing thin, be sure to pinch back the plant when the new growth has made 5 leaves. Remove 2 of the 5 leaves and fertilize the plant again. There is a good chance it will produce additional growth in a month to help thicken the plant. Also, check the plant for a black sticky and dusty film on the foliage and stems, as this is the result of an insect common on bay leaf, called scale. This problem can be easily controlled with a washing of a mild soapy solution of Dawn dishwashing soap and water with a soft cloth and is necessary to keep the foliage clean and insect free. You will see the small bumps on the underside of the leaf or on



the stems and they will come off easily with the soapy cloth.

During the winter months, keep the plant in a sunny window and cut back on the water so the soil dries out a bit--but not totally. I water my plants every other week unless the winter is bright and sunny. Misting the foliage often also helps the plant to thrive indoors during the winter. Fertilize monthly--not every other week as you do during the growing season. If you want to start new plants, the best way is to air layer in the spring. I have not had good luck with rooting cuttings unless I use heating cables under the containers and a rooting powder for hardwood cuttings that has a higher percentage of rooting hormone. This spring, your best bet is to contact your local garden center early, and have them order small plants for you when they get in their herb order.

If you're going to cook with the foliage, be sure to cut leaves and allow them to dry out before using, as fresh leaves are very mild in flavor; leaves do not develop their full flavor until they have totally dried. It will take 3 to 4 weeks for the best flavor-- when the foliage has lost all of its shine and deep rich green color. Also, the fully grown leaves have the best flavor--not the new young leaves.

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Why do you have to prune your plants? You prune because pruning will make your plants healthy, they will look more beautiful and you can control the size and the shape of your plant. You also prune to increase the production of flowers and fruit and you prune to for the pleasure it gives you when the job is finished and you see what you accomplished. I want you to look at pruning as a wonderful way to improve the appearance of your property--NOT WORK. Think of pruning as a relaxing part of gardening that will allow you to become more creative. When you prune your plants, you are shaping the future appearance of that plant so it will better complement your home and garden.

The first thing I always tell gardeners is to say to your plants before you begin to prune: "I am doing this for your own good, I can do this and I am not intimidated with the job to be done!" Take your time when pruning, stop and look at what you're doing several times as you prune a plant, because once you cut that branch, you cannot put it back--it's final. Walk around the plant or look at it from all sides before making a cut. Prune to make your plant look natural and try to stay away from power tools when possible. Power tools do the job quickly and if you're pruning a long hedge, it's the only way to do it--but individual plants should be pruned by hand. Your yard is not DISNEY WORLD; plants do not grow in nature in shapes that are round, square, columnar or conical. What you want to achieve is something in-between natural and Disney!

Start with the right tool for the job--and make sure the tool is sharp. Use your fingers when you remove faded flowers from your annuals or remove suckers from your tomatoes, and even to pinch back vines to help them produce new shoots. If you're going to use a knife or small saw, select one with a folding blade for safety when you carry it around the yard. Pruning shears are for branches under 1 inch in diameter, and they should always be closed when not in use--open pruners in your back pocket are a problem waiting to happen. They have to be sharp and clean or they will crush the stems, not cut them off cleanly. If they aren't sharp, you have damaged the plant every time to made a cut on a branch because a crushed stem cannot form callus and produce a healing scab to keep out disease and water.

Loppers are for branches over 1 inch in diameter; they are designed for medium duty pruning of single branches and for getting inside plants easily. Hand or bow saws are for larger branches and dry or dead wood; they make a nice clean cut--often doing a better job than loppers and causing less damage to the plant. Pole saws are for removal of branches in a tree out of your reach they keep you off a ladder and safe. The chain saw is for major removal of large branches or the entire tree; they work fast, so be careful---and always look around you before cutting for a way out if the branch does not go where you planned for it to fall.

For shaping a hedge, use hedge shears: manual or electric--it does not matter--just take your time, as many small shoots are cut at the same time. If you're using electric shears, always keep an eye on the extension cord, as many of us have cut the cord--and the fun quickly ends. If you're using manual hedge shears, choose some with teeth on the blade or a wavy edge, as this feature will hold the branches in place better. Also--when you use these giant scissors, select a pair with a good rubber shock absorber to help the handle spring-back more easily and get ready for the next cut. This good shock absorber will also make the pruning easier and your arms less tired.

One last thing about your good tools: they are expensive, and maintenance is the secret to a long life. Service will pay you back many times the cost of the tool; all you need is to clean them before and after using them. Sharpening the blade and tightening the screws that hold them together--along with applying oil to the moving parts and the blade--will pay big dividends when you need to use them again. One last thing, tree pitch from evergreens and rust on the blade are not acceptable; they cause you to work harder and put more stress on the tool. Always clean your tools and store them inside--out of the weather.

Now is the best time to prune your plants. Before the foliage begins to develop on the branches--and this next goes for evergreen plants too--prune while the plant is dormant! If you're pruning deciduous plants without foliage it will be easier, because you can see all of the branches and in what direction they are growing. Without foliage, the branches will be lighter and less likely to damage other branches as they fall from the plant--so that's easier for

you to handle. It's also easier to see damaged or dead branches on the plant that must be removed to keep the plant healthy.

Right now, the energy or sap is still in the ground and just beginning to move up the plant. If you wait for the plant to leaf out before pruning, all this energy will be used to make new growth on the plant--and when you cut it off, the new growth is wasted. If you prune now, all the energy in the plant will be used to make new growth to cover the pruning you have just done, and no energy is wasted. Dormant buds will wake up to replace the buds you removed and your plants will become fuller with all this new growth. You may not believe this, but pruning will stimulate growth in most plants, as the dominant buds have been removed and the buds that remain will now compete to become the new leaders of the plant.

Here are a few things to consider when pruning your trees and shrubs this spring.

- 1) Prune all non-flowering plants NOW before the new growth develops--especially evergreens. When the new growth does form, it will hide any of the foliage you cut when pruning. This applies especially to broadleaf evergreens, because where you cut the leaf will turn brown--and half a leaf does not look good on a plant.
- 2) Flowering plants are best pruned as the flowers begin to fade, because after the flowering cycle the new foliage will form, and if you prune now you will remove the flower buds and miss the flowers.
- 3) Roses are always best pruned in the late spring to stimulate new growth and more flowers. Also, the plants will suffer less winter damage than when pruned in the fall. When the baseball season begins for real, it's time to cut back your roses--not during spring training.
- 4) When you prune, remove dead branches, broken branches, diseased branches, suckers, water sprouts and crisscrossing branches that are rubbing together first--before you do anything else to your plants.
- 5) When you prune evergreen plants that have begun to get too large, you can remove up to 75% of the green foliage (NOT 75% of the plant) and it will respond quickly and thicken up for you.
- 6) Prune your blue hydrangea to control the size of the plant but never cut it back to the ground. I would suggest that you wait until the buds begin to swell on the plant--and leave at least half of the buds on every stem, as many hydrangeas flower on buds made the previous year.
- 7) If you're pruning a conical evergreen like a spruce, do not touch the top of the plant or main leader, because your plant will begin to produce several new leaders and you will lose your conical shape.
- 8) Pruning paint is no longer recommended to cover cuts you made on the plant--they will heal much faster without it.
- 9) When you're done pruning, always fertilize your plant to help stimulate new growth and help form a scab to seal the cuts you made and keep out problems.
- 10) Go the book store and look over several good pruning books for information about the plant on your property. Pictures and information can help you do a better job and help encourage you to do this unique part of gardening! Learn to prune--it's rewarding!

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Mevagissey

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

A drug made from the bark of *Cinchona succirubra* was first used in European medicine in the 1600s, and is still used around the world today. What is the name of the drug?

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:

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

Last Week's Winner:

Mary Ann Sharpe

Last Week's Answer:

C. Castor Bean

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...
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- 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:

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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