



FEATURED QUOTE :

"He who plants a tree loves others besides himself."

~ **Thomas Fuller**

All Seasons Horticultural Spray Oil by Bonide

All Seasons Horticultural Spray Oil is a superior type paraffinic oil that may be used as a growing season spray, dormant spray (no leaves) or delayed dormant (green tip) spray to control overwintering eggs of red spiders, scale insects, aphids, bud moths, leaf roller, red bug, codling moth, blister mites, galls, whitefly, mealy bugs and other insects.

Highly recommended for use on fruit trees, shade trees, shrubs, ornamentals, roses and vegetables. Safe and pleasant to use.

Primrose

Spring is just around the corner now and if you are looking for a flowering plant for the house that can be transplanted outside later, look at the primrose. The primrose is a perennial flowering plant that is among a handful of flowers that bloom early in the spring gardens outside. Its Latin name, *Primula vulgaris*, implies earliness and means "early." Because it flowers early naturally, the primrose can be forced to bloom even earlier in the greenhouse for enjoyment in your home at this time of the year.

The foliage is a ground-hugging rosette of shiny green leaves that are medium to dark green in color. The leaves are 4 to 6 inches long and only about an inch wide. The leaves have a rough look to them, as they seem wrinkled or puckered, with small teeth on the edges of the leaf--and a bit hairy. Once you see the rosette growth habit, you will always be able to distinguish this plant from all the rest of the perennials in your garden.

As soon as the frost is out of the ground, the leaves begin to emerge from the ground, and before you know it the flowers pop out of the center of the foliage. The plant will grow 4 to 6 inches tall and spread to about 8 to 10 inches wide. Growth will start in most gardens during March if the snow has melted and the weather has begun to warm up. The flowers come on short stems, 3 to 4 inches tall, and hold clusters of flowers. Each flower has five petals and the bloom resembles a shallow trumpet. The flower colors are BRIGHT, in shades of yellow, red, blue, purple and white. All the flowers have a bright yellow center, like a "bull's eye." The flowers will last from March to May in the garden outdoors and for 4 to 6 weeks indoors, if you can keep them cool. The best temperature indoors is 50 to 60 degrees; keep them out of south-facing windows where they get sun all day.

The primrose will grow best in a soil that is well-drained, and rich in organic matter like compost and peat moss. Grow them in your garden as a border plant up front and in groups of 3 to 5 for the best show of color. Primroses also will grow well in shaded gardens, rock gardens and wall plantings. If you have a woodland or shaded wildflower garden, this plant is a must. Remember the primrose flowers early; if you are looking for early color to motivate you to get you out in the garden early, this is the plant with all the excitement!

As a houseplant, the primrose makes a great potted plant, all by itself. You can mix it with other flowering or foliage plants. I pick the faded flowers from the stems as they fade; when the stem has no more buds I remove the entire stem right above the foliage at the base of the plant. This prevents the plant from making seeds and the energy stays in the plant, so you can transplant it into the garden in mid to late April.

No fertilizer is needed in the house, but once you plant in the garden use compost and a product like Flower Thrive, Bio-Tone or Dr. Earth Starter Fertilizer, as they contain microbes and mycorrhizae for a quick start to the root system. The new garden technology in fertilizer will astound you because it is a reproduction of what lives in your soil already--and plants love it. Treated with this technology, plants grow better, faster, healthier, bloom more and need less care. Enjoy indoors now and plant outside for years of enjoyment in your garden outside.

Sweet Alyssum: A Plant For Cool Climates & The Seashore

When I first started to work in the flower garden with my mother, I quickly fell in love with a wonderful fragrant plant called sweet alyssum. My mother always planted this flower because it could grow in our short growing season of Central Maine, and give her an endless amount of colorful flowers that hugged the ground in her flower border and throughout her rose garden as a ground cover. As I think about this now, we did not have bark mulch to cover the ground to control weeds and to help decorate the soil around the plants to give the garden that extra pop of color and texture. My mother was ahead of her time when it came to the garden and she was a great teacher for me.

The sweet alyssum is a plant native to the Mediterranean and the Canary Islands, where it still grows wild. The soil there is rocky and sandy--and the climate is windy and cool, due to the water. The plant is so delicate looking, almost like fine lace, but it thrives in cool weather--and this plant is tough, making it perfect for a sunny dry spot in your yard or a bit of late-day shade. If you have a seaside home or camp on the lake, this is one flower to think about planting in your garden this spring.

The plant will produce endless flower stems that are totally covered with rounded clusters of fragrant, four petaled flowers about 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter all summer long. You never see the foliage of the plant or the ground it is growing on--just elongated balls of flowers and buds. The plant will grow 6 to 8 inches tall and spread to more than a foot wide if you fertilize it regularly and water when the temperatures get hot and humid. We had planted a tall hedge of rose bushes for privacy along our patio and the sweet alyssum that my mother planted under the roses made the rose bushes more beautiful. I cannot remember the name or type of hedge rose she planted but it grew some of the most fragrant red roses I ever smelled.

Now add the fragrance of the sweet alyssum to the rose bushes--and our patio became the talk of the neighborhood all summer long. The other thing you should know is that the plants often would reseed themselves the following year in the garden. The butterflies loved this plant and so did the hummingbirds. So I always considered this annual flower as a plant that made a carpet of blooms that weave through the rose garden, and a makes great filler plant to replace early flowering perennials in the garden. My mother also planted seeds in the cracks of the flagstone patio, as it was built on top of a loam area in the yard not a patio built with a sand base. As kids, we had to be careful not to step on them or Mom would let us know that we were in her garden enjoying a cookout, so "look where you're walking and enjoy the garden."

We always started the plants from seed as they were easy to germinate and grow, but they did not like to be transplanted or separated so we started them in small peat pots with 4 to 5 seeds per pot and planted them as a clump in the garden. Before planting, we always added peat moss and chicken manure to the garden to help get them growing faster--and they loved it. We started the seeds indoors in mid-March so we could plant in early May.

The plants are almost carefree once established in the garden, as long as you water regularly and fertilize every month with a good granular fertilizer like Dr. Earth flower fertilizer with pro biotic or Flower Tone with Bio-tone microbes added to the mixture. In those days we used Rapid-Grow and Hytrous plant food, too bad they are no longer available, as they were great products but could not compete with the new products that came out with big dollars behind them for promotion. So today I use the Dr. Earth and Flower Tone products with great results in their place.

Sweet alyssum comes in white, pink, rose, violet- purple and lavender. Many garden centers or nurseries sell these plants in the spring and are one of the flowers that can be planted early--about the same time as you plant pansies in the garden--as they will tolerate the late frosty weather.

You can also plant sweet alyssum in a stone wall if you fill the spaces with garden soil, and then watch them cascade down the wall for great special effects in the garden. As a planter or window box plant they do very well and will cascade over the rim of the containers filling it with handful of lacy flower clusters all summer long. They also look great in hanging baskets when mixed with other types of flowers and foliage plants.

My favorite varieties of sweet alyssum are: 'Carpet of Snow' for white flowers, 'Rosie O'Day' for lavender-pink flowers, 'Clear Crystal Lavender' for lavender flowers and 'Easter Basket' for a wonderful mixture of violet, pink, lavender, and white flowers. This spring lets think old fashioned flowers for the garden. You will not be disappointed with your choice. Enjoy!

The Green Leafy Vegetable With Power

Last year my wife asked me to plant kale in the vegetable garden for her so I did, as she never asks for anything special in the vegetable garden. I did a bit of research about the plant and found out how nutritional the plant was for you, so I planted a row of seed in the garden for her. I love collard greens since visiting my son Matthew in Florida, as collard greens are a very popular green in the South, as spinach is in the North. Now we would each have a special green to enjoy all year long from the garden, as both plants will survive the cold weather of the fall. To my surprise, I now eat as much kale as my wife does but collard greens are still my favorite. So let me tell you about this wonderful green leafy plant and how to grow it in your garden this spring.

Kale was one of the most popular green vegetables in all of Europe as far back as the middle ages, and the curly leaf variety was being grown in the days of the Greek and Roman Empires. Many changes have been made to the plant to improve its quality and flavor but the plant is still packed with powerful vitamins and minerals. In the 19th century, new Russian hybrids were introduced to Canada and then to the U.S. by traders. My dad told me that while he was stationed in England during the Second World War, kale was a staple food to help get more nutritional value in the diet of the soldiers. Because it was easy to grow and a heavy producer it was a perfect green to help fill in the place of missing food groups in the days of food rationing. My dad was a chef, and he knew what was good for you and how to cook it so you could enjoy it--and kale was not just to be used as a food garnish, "that's parsley's job," he would say. I ate kale as a child but it never was one of those greens that excited me. My mother-in-law always told my children "Your taste buds change every 6 months so could you please taste it again for ME?" They did, to please her--and sometimes it worked--so today my kids eat more things than they did when they were younger; thanks Nana!

Now, kale will grow best in a rich loamy soil that is on the acid side but as long as your soil is well drained it will grow in most gardens that have been conditioned before planting. Use compost, animal manure, seaweed or the new garden coir fiber made from the hull covering of the coconut that we all love to eat. Black Gold sells it by the bag. I added it to the garden 3 years ago and the fibers are still there, working to help hold moisture in the soil. The peat moss I added is used up by the soil microbes every year and must be added yearly to do the same thing as coir does to add the much-needed organic matter to the soil. Coir is a new soil conditioner that is renewable every year with the coconut harvest and was once thrown away as waste--just like the bark from trees now used as mulch for the garden. Try it in part of your garden and you will see what I mean, it's great stuff.

Plant your seed in the garden as soon as the soil has warmed up, about the same time as you plant spinach. Sow seeds in a row 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep and space the seeds a foot apart, as the plants will get large. I plant 3 to 4 seeds together and thin to 2 seedlings when they reach an inch or two tall. I also add straw mulch or compost around the plants to keep the weeds out and hold the water in the soil during the summer months. I dig a shallow trench before planting the seed and add a good organic fertilizer like Dr. Earth garden food with Pro Biotic or Garden Tone with Biotone microbes to get the plant off to a good start. I also side dress the row of kale every other month to keep the plants productive right up to the time the snow kills the plant. Water kale plants weekly during the hot days of summer to keep the plant producing new foliage all year long. Harvest the foliage as soon as the foliage has grown over a foot long. If the leaves have become longer, remove the center mid rib for better taste. Never pick the terminal bud at the top of the plant or your plant will stop producing new foliage. Pick the lower leaves first and move up the plant. If you feed the plant like I do and water when the heat arrives during the summer your plants will grow to be 3 to 4 feet tall. Small tender leaves can be used in a mixed salad green salad and the larger leaves can be cooked like spinach once you remove the center mid rib.

Insect and disease problems are minimal; if you grow cabbage in the garden the kale plant could have any of the same problems that the cabbage has--again minimal.

Kale will taste better once it has been exposed to frost in the fall, as the chilly weather seems to bring out a sweeter and more flavorful taste--but I eat it all year long as the foliage matures. My wife bakes the foliage with a coating of olive oil and sea salt for about 20 minutes or until crisp and loves it better than potato chips (and it's better for you, too). I also like kale soup, steamed kale when mixed with mash potatoes and in a New England Boiled Dinner along with the cabbage. In the late fall, if you have a lot in the garden, wash the leaves of any soil and freeze them in freezer bags, as they keep well to add to soups and meals during the winter months. You're all grown up now and it's time to try something new from your garden, can this be the year to try kale? Enjoy

Alaska Trip

Paul Parent will be hosting a tour that includes:

Vancouver, BC

- Butchart Gardens--55 acres of floral display!

- Cruising the Inside Passage:
- Ketchikan
- Icy Strait Point
- Juneau
- Skagway
- Hubbard Glacier Cruising
- Seward
- Scenic Drive to Anchorage
- Denali National Park
- Fairbanks City Tour, a tour of the Gold Dredge # 8 and a cruise down the Chena river on the Riverboat Discovery Sternwheeler.

Trivia

This Week's Question

Which of these plants was Luther Burbank NOT responsible for developing?

- Freestone peach
- Opata plum
- Flaming Gold nectarine
- Shasta daisy
- White blackberry

his 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

Last Week's Question:

If I were to use a mattock in the garden, what would I most likely be doing with it?

- A. breaking up hard ground
- B. digging up weeds
- C. pruning the rose bushes
- D. sleeping in it
- E. watering the plants

Last Week's Winner:

Bill Gray

Last Week's Answer:

A. Breaking up hard ground

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!



Featured Recipe:

Guinness Roast Beef

What You'll Need:

- One 3-4 lb. beef regal rump roast
- 3 tbsp. coarse ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp. garlic salt
- 2-3 cups Guinness (or other stout)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 cups cut carrots
- 1 green bell pepper, sliced in strips
- 2-3 potatoes, cubed
- 1/2 cup COLD water
- 1 tbsp. flour

Step by Step:

- Heat oven to 350°F.
- Rinse roast and pat dry.
- Mix pepper and garlic salt; rub onto all sides of roast.
- Place roast on bottom of clay or metal roasting pan; add oil, bay leaf, 2 cups Guinness and 1 cup water (or 3 cups Guinness for stronger flavor).
- Roast covered for 90 minutes.
- Add vegetables, roast covered for 30 minutes. Add more liquid, if necessary.
- Remove meat and veggies to a platter.

Gravy:

- Pour liquid into a small saucepan; heat to near boiling.

- Add 1/2 cup COLD water and flour. Add flour/water mixture slowly to saucepan, stirring constantly.
- Reduce to simmer, stir until thickened.

Yield: 4 servings

Contact Us:

207) 985-6972
(800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)

Fax:
(207) 985-6972

Address:
Paul Parent Garden Club
2 Blueberry Pines Dr
Kennebunk, ME 04043

Regular Phone Hours:
Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM
Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM