

**From:** Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>  
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Edition 13.11	<b>Paul Parent Garden Club News</b>	March 14, 2013
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### Featured Quotation:

"In the end, color combinations come down to our personal preferences, which we must discover through observation and experiment."  
~ Montagu Don



## Black Gold Seedling Mix

Black Gold Seedling Mix is formulated with an organic wetting agent to ensure uniform water penetration and a fine texture to encourage high germination and easy transplanting. This blend of fine grade Canadian Sphagnum peat moss and fine perlite is perfect for germinating seeds in pots, flats and plug trays.

[For more information, see the Black Gold website.](#)



## St. Patrick's Day in the USA

Everyone associates St. Patrick's Day with Ireland--it's a celebration of Ireland's most-recognized patron saint, right? Aside from the fact that Saint Patrick wasn't Irish (he is said to have been born in either Scotland or Wales), the holiday did, of course, originate in Ireland. But which country, do you suppose, is at the head of the list when it comes to celebrating the big day? Why, none other than the good ol' USA!

While celebrations take place in most cities across America (where everyone suddenly becomes Irish overnight), one of the earliest St. Paddy's Day parades (second only to Boston) took place in **New York City** in 1762. Today, this parade is the largest celebration and parade in the USA, with around 150,000 participants each year that attract millions of people lining 5th Avenue. Floats, cars and exhibits are not allowed in this parade that will be celebrating its 251st consecutive year.

Because of its 1 million plus residents of Irish descent, **Chicago's** celebration of St. Patrick's Day is a huge event. Green is everywhere, including the Chicago River, which is dyed green especially for the holiday. Interestingly (if not appetizingly), the idea originally came from sewer workers, who would dye the river green to look for sewer discharges. Other U.S. cities that employ green water especially for the day are **Savannah, Georgia** (the water in all public fountains is dyed green) and **Indianapolis, Indiana** (it dyes its main canal green).

**Boston** has a special tie with Ireland--being the closest U.S. port to Ireland, it was the port through which many of the Irish that were immigrating to America passed. Boston also has the distinction of hosting the world's first recorded parade for the holiday in 1737, beating Dublin, Ireland by a couple of hundred years. And if you would like to spend your St. Patrick's Day engaging in the time-honored pastime of drinking, there is no better place to go than Boston, which has more Irish pubs than any city outside of Ireland. Its popular parade, featuring bagpipers, floats and bands, generally attracts upwards of 600,000 people each year.

**Savannah, Georgia's** St. Patrick's Day parade began as a small affair in 1813 to honor a group of men of Irish descent on the anniversary of the death of St. Patrick. Today, it is the city's largest annual celebration, attracting over half a million people.

If you live on the west coast, don't despair--just make your way to "the city by the bay"--**San Francisco**--and enjoy their fabulous St. Patrick's Day parade that dates back to 1852. This "largest St. Patrick's Day gathering west of the Mississippi" is entering its 162nd year!

### Gifts for the Gardener

[Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!](#)

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**Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?**

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We hope you enjoy your St. Patrick's Day, no matter where you find yourself. In closing, let us leave you with these Irish words of wisdom, particularly true on St. Patrick's Day:  
*"There are only two kinds of people in the world, the Irish and those who wish they were."*

## Happy St. Patrick's Day!

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This begonia is a creation of horticulturalists from all over the world. No flower has had so many ancestors and undergone so many complicated modifications. Begonias were named for Michel Begon, a botanist who spent many years developing new varieties of the plant. He was at one time governor of French Canada and is responsible for many of the current varieties we have today. Tuberous begonias are known for their flowers, whose shapes vary a great deal, resembling hollyhocks, carnations, camellias, and roses. Some varieties have a single flower, some have double flowers and some have both single and double flowers on the same plant.

Tuberous begonias are like no other summer flowering bulb, as they will flower all summer long and well into the fall. They are the showiest and the largest family of shade-loving bulbs. They also have more applications than any other bulb when planted in the garden. Begonias can be planted in containers of all types and even in hanging baskets. Try them in window boxes, urns and even whiskey barrels. On your decks, patios, terrace, or porches they will provide you with endless color all summer.

With many hundreds of varieties to choose from, the Begonia family has the plant height, flower size, flower color, foliage texture, and growth habit for you. I like the hanging or drooping varieties that cascade flowers over the side of the container, covering it with flowers. The drooping or cascading types have clusters of small flowers on their stems and are wonderful for porches or small terraces in a shady location. The large flowering types will grow to 18 inches tall with thick stems that help to hold flowers up to 3 inches in diameter. The foliage is deep green and triangular in shape, with small teeth on the margins.

Purchase your bulbs now and start them indoors on your windowsill. Fill a pot with a man-made soil like Jiffy Mix half way and place the tuber with the cup side facing up. Cover the bulb with 2 inches of soil and keep it moist but not wet. In no time at all, the warmth of the window will develop shoots from the tuber and the growth will develop quickly. In the house, the plant matures quickly and by the time the weather is safe enough for them to be planted outdoors, flower buds will be developing. When you plant, be sure to condition the soil with compost or animal manure. The better the soil, the more flowers the plant will make. When growing in containers, use Soil Moist in the soil to help retain water during the heat of summer. Fertilize every two weeks with Miracle-Gro or add Osmocote pellets to the soil mixture for continuous feeding all summer long.

The begonias come from mild climate countries, and when grown in a cold region, the tubers must be dug up from the garden after a frost and stored in the basement during the winter months. Store the bulbs in a box filled with dry peat moss on the basement floor. Keep them away from heat but temperatures must be above freezing, so don't store them in your garage. I always dust the bulbs with "Rose and Flower" garden dust before winter storage. If you grow begonias in containers, allow the top of the plant to be frosted and cut the foliage off to the ground. I put the containers in the basement for the winter and they never dry up, as all the roots are still intact. Do not water during the winter! In April I just add water and it comes right back to life. Shade is not a reason not to have flowers around your property when you have so many types of tuberous begonias to choose from. Enjoy!

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If you have cabin fever and are looking for a sign that spring is near, look to the pussy willow--because SPRING is just around the corner--just 6 days away. The pussy willow is a native plant to wet areas all over the northeast U.S. and is winter-hardy to 20-30 below zero. So if you have a wet spot on your property, you must plant the pussy willow this spring, so next spring you can enjoy a sign of hope after a long winter.

The pussy willow is a tall-growing shrub; if not pruned too much, it will grow 15 to 25 feet tall and 15 feet wide, about the size of a flowering crabapple. This plant is loved for one thing: its beautiful soft creamy-white catkins that form on the plant during March and April. The plant will grow upright with an oval appearance or shape. It is a plant of many trunks or branches--not a single-stem plant like the flowering crabapple.

The pussy willow is fast growing; if planted in a wet area on your property it will grow 2 to 3 feet every year. The new growth is long and slender, making wonderful branches for cutting. They will look wonderful in a tall vase on your kitchen table. These branches are also very easy to force into bloom earlier than normal by just cutting the stems from the plant during February or March and placing them in a tall vase of water in a warm room. The buds will

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open, casting off the bud covering, and in just 7 to 10 days the soft catkins will emerge. When these buds get to the size of a jelly bean or larger, drain the vase of water, and keep them in the dry vase for several weeks.

The new growth or branches are dark brown, smooth, and shiny looking. They are about the thickness of a pencil, and the length is determined by the amount of water around the plant during the year. During the winter the stem is covered with pointed, 1/2 inch long, purple-brown buds. When the weather begins to warm up these buds will open to expose male catkins or flowers that will grow 1 to 2 inches long before turning yellow and falling from the plant. When they fall, new growth will develop and so will the foliage. The leaves are 2 to 4 inches long and about 1 inch wide. These leaves are dark green and the edges seem to be wavy and oval, with a dull point on the tip. This new growth starts off almost kelly green, but when they mature, the stems will quickly turn a rich dark brown.

The pussy willow will grow best in full sun but will tolerate a bit of shade late in the day. Too much shade will make the plant grow tall and thin, and it will produce few new branches with buds. This thinness will also make them vulnerable to snow damage when the snow is wet and heavy.

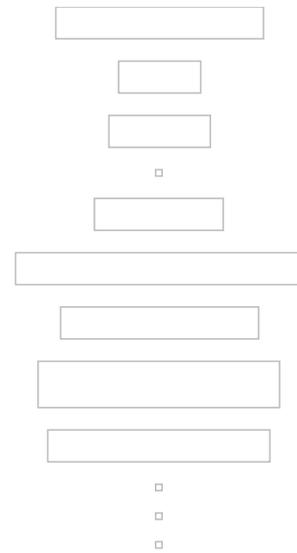
There is no special soil needed to grow this plant; just be sure to add plenty of compost, peat moss, or animal manure when you plant, so the roots will develop quickly in the spring. Wet soil is preferred--and this plant will help drain wet spots in your yard, making them more usable, especially in the spring time. Like the giant weeping willow tree, keep this plant away from leaching fields or septic tank areas in your yards or the roots will quickly create problems for you by plugging the system.

The plant does look great all by itself but when planted in groups or in a row to create a barrier planting, it will wake up your yard in the early spring with color. If you like this plant and want to start your own plants, it is very easy to do. Take an empty half-gallon milk or juice bottle and cut off the top couple of inches of the container, fill it with soil from your garden and add water so the soil is now mud. Cut fresh pussy willows or buy fresh-cut pussy willows from your local garden center or florist and push them all the way to the bottom of the container of mud. The buds soon fall from the branches and make foliage; and below all that mud, roots will also form quickly.

Put 3 to 5 branches in your container and arrange them to create a nice looking cluster of branches. When the foliage has grown to 3 to 5 inches long and you can see roots through the milky plastic container, it is time to transplant them into your yard. Plant them as a single plant; do not pull apart when planting. Keep wet until fall and fertilize with Plant-Tone fertilizer when you put them into the ground. The roots grow horizontally, so firm in place, but do not stamp the ground around the plant with your feet or you will break off the new roots.

If you want a truly fascinating variety, look for the Japanese Fantail pussy willow, called *Salix sachalinensis* 'Sekka.' This type has flat, twisted, curling branches with multiple rows of soft fluffy buds, and is often found at spring flower shows. They are wonderful for flower arrangements, but in your yard the shrubby tree will get you wonderful comments. The foliage will grow 4 to 6 inches long and the plant has more of a weeping growing habit to 15 feet tall and wide. If you have the room on your property, this is a plant you can grow, cut, and sell the branches to your local garden center in the springtime. Most businesses will jump to buy these branches from you. I would also check with them about growing plants for them to sell at their nursery--this plant is that unique!

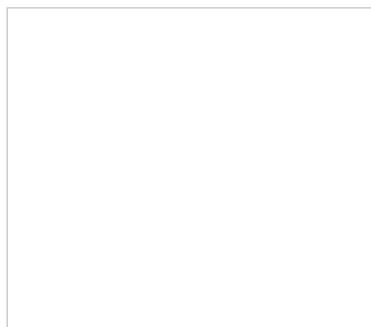
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## Alaska trip

### 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.

[Click here for more information.](#)



**This Week's Question**

Which of the following is not a garden pest?

- A. Bats
- B. Lizards
- C. Spiders
- D. Toads and Frogs
- E. All of them are beneficial in a garden

**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



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

[Click Here to Answer](#)

**Last Week's Question:**

What is another name for the plantain lily?

- A. Ajuga
- B. Clematis
- C. Helleborus
- D. Hosta
- E. Toad Lily

**Last Week's Winner:**

Phil Lewis

**Last Week's Answer:**

D. Hosta

**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

[Click here to order online.](#)



## Featured Recipe: Shepherd's Pie

- 2 lb. potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 6 tbsp. whole milk
- 1 stick butter, cubed
- 1 tbsp. butter for the sauce
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 1/2 tbsp. lard or dripping
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup finely diced carrots (see substitutions below)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 cups ground or minced lamb
- 1 3/4 cups beef stock
- 1 cup chopped white mushrooms
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped flat leaf parsley
- 1 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese (if you can get an Irish cheddar, by all means, do!)

**Substitutions:**

- Vegetables: you can also use peas, corn, mixed veggies...if you use frozen veggies, thaw first. Canned veggies are not recommended.
- If you don't like mushrooms, add another cup of veggies.
- You may substitute ground beef for the lamb--but then it's a Cottage Pie, not a Shepherd's Pie.

### Step by Step:

- Heat the oven to 375 degrees F.
- Boil the potatoes until soft; then drain into a colander.
- Place the milk and butter in the pan used to boil the potatoes, return to the heat and warm gently until the butter has melted.
- Add the potatoes and mash. Salt and pepper to taste and keep to one side.
- Melt the lard or dripping in a large deep pan.
- Add the onion and carrot and fry for 5 minutes.
- Add the garlic and cook for another minute.
- Add the ground lamb and one-third of the beef stock to the onion and carrot mixture and cook, stirring constantly until all the meat is browned.
- Add the remaining stock, parsley and mushrooms, season with salt and pepper. Cover with a lid and cook for 15 minutes.
- Mash the flour into the remaining 1 tbsp. butter then add in small pieces to the ground meat sauce, stirring until all the flour has dissolved and the sauce has thickened slightly, approx. 5 mins (use more or less flour to adjust to your desired consistency).
- Place the meat and sauce into an 8" X 3" deep ceramic or glass baking dish and cover with the mashed potato.
- Sprinkle the grated cheese on top of the potato and bake in the heated oven for 30-35 minutes, or until the surface is crisp and browned.
- Serve immediately



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