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Edition 10.14	Paul Parent Garden Club News	April 8, 2010
	<p>FEATURED QUOTE :</p> <p>"Every spring is the only spring--a perpetual astonishment." ~Ellis Peters</p>	<p>Gifts for the Gardener</p> <p>Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p>
		
<p>AmTurf Ultra Lawn Patch</p>		
	<p>When you're patching the inevitable bare spots in your lawn, choose Ultra's all-natural products. This safe and biodegradable product spreads more easily and absorbs moisture faster than any other combination product. Safe for kids and pets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Premium seed, natural fertilizer and mulch all in one package.• Revolutionary granulated mulch helps hold seeds in place.• Seed mixed for fast growth, thick coverage and durability.• Reclosable zipper bags.• Available in 5 lb., 20 lb. and NEW 1.75 lb. size.	<p>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>Phone Hours: Monday-Saturday 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p>Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</p> <p>Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</p>
		
<p>You have worked hard all day and it is now time to relax at home. I think that the best place to relax is in your back yard, in your favorite chair, breathing the fresh air that your lawn made for you while you were at work. Your lawn has been cleaning all the impurities around your house and changing it to clean oxygen while you were working, and it is ready for you now. Did you know that just 625 square feet of grass--30' by 20'--supplies all the oxygen that a person needs each day? The average home lawn is 5000 sq. ft., producing enough oxygen for eight people each day. When talking trees it will take two 100-foot tall trees to do the same thing for eight people. You thought it was just grass to mow!</p>		
<p>This year let us start from scratch with your lawn. I want you to walk on your lawn and look at it closely. Look at the color of the grass, the density of the grass, weeds that are beginning to develop, bare spots in the grass, and exposure to sun and shade. I want you to sit down with this information and decide what you have to do to make the lawn better this year. The color of the grass should be deep green. This color will improve when you fertilize your lawn. Fertilizer applied during April will quickly darken the color of the grass and help thicken areas that seem to be a little thin. Grass that is dark green and thick will have fewer weeds and discourage future weed development. Ask any real estate agent and they will tell you that a home with a good green lawn will sell faster than a lawn covered with weeds.</p>		
<p>If weeds are present now, they are perennial and will return each year. If you have thin spots or bare spots in your lawn, now is the time to fill them in with fresh grass seed. If you do not plant these areas, Mother Nature will do it for you and she will use her own mixture of what we consider weeds. If you are planting grass seed, remember that the lawn with weed problems cannot be treated until the new grass seed is up and growing. The weed killer will kill the newly germinating</p>		
<p>Trains of the Colorado Rockies Trip</p> <p>Join us for a journey into the grand landscapes and fascinating history of the American West.</p> <p>Click here for more information.</p> <p>Have a Look Around Our Website:</p> <p>Home About Paul Paul's Recipes</p>		

seedlings; you must wait until the plants have grown enough to mow twice before you apply the weed killer. If your lawn contains more perennial weeds and fewer open spots, concentrate on those weeds now and reseed in the fall. Perennial weeds will get bigger and in the weeks to come, producing hundreds of seeds and making the problem even worse. Crabgrass, for example, can produce several thousand seeds per plant each fall.

If the entire lawn has a weed problem, fertilize it to thicken the grass and prevent future weed growth. Combination weed killer and fertilizer products such as Scotts Turf Builder Plus 2 or Jonathan Green Weed and Feed are available at your local garden center. Apply when you see that the dandelion plant is beginning to flower. Apply the product when the grass is wet or covered with the morning dew. Wet grass will catch the dry granular product better and the moisture on the leaf will dissolve the weed killer so the leaf can absorb it quickly and begin to destroy the weeds. Make sure that there is no rain for the next 24 hours! Did you know that when the temperature of asphalt or concrete is 100 degrees or more, your lawn will be a pleasant 75 degrees? The grass works like an air conditioner around your home to help keep it cooler. Remember, it is just grass.

If your weeds are scattered all over the lawn, spot treat those weeds with a liquid weed killer such as Bonide "Weed Beater Ultra" or Fertilome "Weed Out with Q." Both these products can be applied to the lawn as soon as weeds are visible and work even when the temperatures are still cold. Both will also kill ajuga, ground ivy, and violets, which are difficult to control. Remember that a good thick lawn will also absorb unwanted noise. Grass is the best and safest surface for your children to play on. Grass will help to keep the house cleaner by trapping dust. Grass prevents erosion problem caused by heavy rains because the roots knit the soil together trapping runoff water. One last thing, when was the last time you saw a sign on a lawn that said "KEEP OFF THE GRASS"? Today grass seed is stronger than ever and you can play on it all you want without hurting it, so do.

From Maine to Florida, when spring arrives, it is greeted with the one of the most beautiful flowering trees--the magnolia. This tree is reliable and will flower each spring no matter how hard the winter was. It will grow in most yards no matter what type of soil you have as long as there is no standing water. You can plant it on the front lawn as a specimen plant in full sun, or in the backyard in a small shaded garden. The magnolia will do well near the seashore if sheltered from the wind or plant it at a cottage near a lake or pond for early flowers. You even have your choice of flower size from the large cup-shaped 5 to 10 inch blooms or the smaller star type with 3 to 4 inch multi petal.

The Saucer Magnolia is the most popular with gardeners because of the large flowers, which resemble very large tulips with nine petals that stand up on the tips of leafless branches in April. Many years, if the spring weather is normal the magnolia will be in bloom for Easter. The flower color ranges from white, pink, purple and the new yellow variety. The bark of the tree is smooth, gray and very pleasant to look at even during the long days of winter. During the winter, the flower buds are very noticeable on the tip of the branches because of their size (almost as big as your thumb). The flowers will last for several weeks as long as there is no severe rain or wind storms as the flowers mature. With good weather, it should bloom for four plus weeks.

One of the qualities I think the magnolia has is the look it gives to your yard when all the flowers fall from the tree. The petals seem to fall all together, covering the ground like a blanket of petals around the tree. This blanket of colorful petals will last for several days as long as the weather is not too warm. The leaves--3 to 6 inches long and oval, with a smooth edge--will develop on the plant after the flowers fall from the plant in May. The leaves are also dark green and have a shine to them. Fall color on the magnolia is just a muddy yellow and not exciting to look at. The tree will grow to 20 to 30 feet tall and wide.

The Star Magnolia is more popular in a colder climate, as it can grow to minus 30 degrees and still flower every year. The plant is more shrub-like, with many stems developing from the base of the plant. Give this plant room, as it will grow 15 to 20 feet tall and can spread out to as much as 15 feet wide. The flowers are not as large--3 to 5--inches in diameter and resemble a pinwheel. The flower is made up of small petals in the shape of your finger 1/2 to 3/4 wide and 1 to 2 inches long. The Star Magnolia contains up to 30 petals per flower. Most varieties are pure white and because they are smaller, they will last longer on the tree. The wind seems to blow right through them, unlike the saucer type. They also have the same look, dropping flower petals like a blanket below the tree.

The best time to purchase a plant is in the spring when it is in bloom; that way you know what the color is when you buy it. The purple-pink flowering type of magnolia will have some that are more pink and others that are more purple in color, so you choose. When planting the magnolia, use plenty of compost in the hole to help the plant to develop a strong root system. To help hold moisture, use "Soil Moist" during the hot days of summer. Also, add Bio-Tone or Plant Thrive fertilizer to the hole as these products contain mycorrhizae to stimulate the roots and help make flower buds for next year. Use either of these products every spring to keep the flowers coming. One last treat: if the bees do their job, the plant will make a pod 3 to 4 inches tall which resembles a baby rattle. As the pod dries, small red seeds will develop inside the pod and the birds will eat them--or you can save them and start a new tree.

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The first time I fed my children spinach, it came in a baby food jar labeled "Strained Spinach." They did not like it and I do not blame them, as I would not eat it myself in that form. It tasted like green plaster but I had to eat some, to show them that Dad liked it and it must be good. As the kids grew, they never acquired a taste for it because of this first experience. Then one day in the spring, I took the kids out into the garden to plant. We planted tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers and salad greens -- the things they liked -- except that year we also planted some spinach as a test. That first year we picked the spinach as a green for the salad and they liked it (two points for Dad). At Thanksgiving, we picked the last of the spinach from the garden and cooked it for the dinner. There were strange looks from the kids but the deal was, "Try a little bit and if you do not like it, you do not have to eat it". I think back now and remember seeing more butter, salt and pepper with a little white vinegar on the spinach than was needed, but they ate it and enjoyed it for the most part. It is still not a favorite when cooked but they love it in salads.

Spinach comes from Persia originally, then moved to China and then Spain. Spinach was a very popular crop in Colonial New England as it grew in the garden when the weather was still cold for most other vegetables and everyone was looking for fresh vegetables. Today spinach is grown all over the world, but the United States is the number one producer of this spring vegetable. When planted in April, spinach will be ready in late May and last until late June. If you plant a crop every 2 weeks, you will have fresh salad greens until the hot days of summer arrive. I always buy double the seeds required so I can plant a fall crop in mid August for September and October. When the weather gets hot the plant grows very fast and "bolts" which means going to seed rather than making foliage. The leaves at that time also become bitter tasting, so pick and enjoy while the weather is cool. During July and August plant Swiss chard for fresh greens.

Plant spinach in a rich garden soil. Condition the soil with compost, animal manure or peat moss. The better the soil, the more foliage it will produce; if you can keep the plants watered regularly and fed with a vegetable fertilizer once a month, you will have enough to give away to neighbors and friends. Plant the seeds 1 inch deep in rows and 2 inches apart between seeds. I like to plant a double row 12 inches apart and 3 feet long. In two weeks, plant another 3 feet until the space is filled up. The seeds will germinate in 7 to 10 days and must be kept wet during that time, so water every day for the best germination. If the garden soil gets dry, the plant will stop producing foliage and go to seed, so water regularly to keep it productive. Plant Bloomsdale or Melody Spinach for early crops and switch to New Zealand Spinach for crops that will mature when the heat arrives, as this variety is more heat tolerant.

For salad greens, pick when the leaves are small and young. The plant will keep producing as you pick the leaves as long as you feed with a liquid fertilizer like Miracle-Grow. For cooked spinach, cut the plant to the ground, wash, and pull off the individual leaves along with the buds for cooking. Pick, wash and store in a zip lock bag in the refrigerator to toughen the leaves for salads. No matter how you use it, fresh picked will have a much better flavor than what you purchase at the supermarket. One last thing, "Popeye the Sailor Man" was right, because spinach has over 20 minerals and vitamins in the foliage, making spinach a real power house green vegetable from your spring garden. Plant some today for yourself and your kids!



This Week's Question:

What sense receptor do butterflies have on their feet?

This Week's Prize:

One bottle of Vacation.

[Click Here to Answer](#)

Last Week's Question:

What can butterflies see that we can't?

Last Week's Prize:

One bottle of Vacation.

Last Week's Winner:

Sandra Occhino

Last Week's Answer:

Butterflies can see red, green, and yellow, but they also see color in the ultraviolet range, which reveals patterns on flowers and other butterflies that we can't see.

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:

Beef Stew



Using a crock pot, start this recipe in the morning so when you get home from work, dinner is waiting for you!

What You Need:

- 2 medium russet potatoes
- 4 carrots
- 1 small onion
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 lb fondue beef or stewing beef (thawed)
- 4 bay leaves
- 5 beef bouillon cubes
- Pinch of oregano
- Fresh ground pepper to taste

Step by Step:

- Peel potatoes and slice into cubes.
- Peel carrots and slice into bite-size chunks.
- Dice onion.
- Place in slow cooker/crock pot in that order.
- Add other ingredients in order listed.
- Fill crock pot with water leaving an inch or so for steam to build at the top.
- Cook on low for eight hours. (You can also omit the potatoes and serve the stew atop homemade baked potatoes, using the liquid as a gravy).

Yield: 4 servings



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