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Edition 10.21	<b>Paul Parent Garden Club News</b>	May 27, 2010
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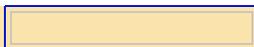


#### Featured Quote:

"I believe that there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright."  
~Henry David Thoreau

## Come see Paul's House!

Join us for the 16th annual "Private Gardens of the Kennebunks" Garden Tour, July 17, 2010 from 10:00 - 4:00. SHINE OR RAIN. All proceeds benefit the prevention programs of the Child Abuse Prevention Council of York County, Maine. Tour nine lovely gardens throughout Kennebunk and Kennebunkport. Advance tickets are \$15.00 before July 1st; \$20.00 July 1st through day of the event. Please call (207) 985-5975 or visit <http://www.kidsfreetogrow.org> for more information!



#### Gifts for the Gardener

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

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## Memorial Day and Poppies

Memorial Day, originally called "Decoration Day," was first celebrated on May 30th, 1868, to honor those (Union soldiers) who died in the American Civil War (the South had their own memorials at that time). After World War I, the day became one to honor all Americans who died fighting any war. But why the poppies?



Poppy seeds lie dormant in the soil, and heavily turning or digging up the soil causes them to sprout. Poppies have long been noted for suddenly "popping up" on battlefields and in graveyards.

#### In Flanders Fields.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

Major John McCrae, a Canadian, wrote the poem "In Flanders Fields" the day after the burial of a young friend and student, after seeing the poppies in the cemetery where his student had been buried.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Moina Michael, an American, was very moved by the poem, and wrote a short poem of her own in response, from which these lines are excerpted:

*We cherish too, the Poppy red  
That grows on fields where valor led.  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies.*

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

— Major John McCrae

She began the tradition of wearing red poppies on Memorial day in honor of those who died serving the nation, also selling poppies and giving the money to a charity benefitting servicemen in

need. The tradition of wearing poppies spread and is now practiced in many countries on their own days of remembrance.

Not only did Ms. Michael start the tradition of wearing poppies, she also seems to be responsible for the tradition of selling them to benefit servicemen in need. Many veterans' organizations will be selling them for this Memorial Day. They aren't expensive but they are very valuable. Buy one, wear it at the barbecue or party, and remember what our freedom costs.



All gardeners are brought to the act of gardening by a moment of crystalline clarification; a childhood moment at lake's edge where the moonlight bounces off of the water; a hike through the woods when a sudden shaft of sunlight illuminates the soft lime green of a moss bed; a field trip to the botanical garden where exotics make you heady with their fragrance, and the colors and textures surrounding you make you feel as if you're in the center of an Impressionist painting.

A gardener has the ability to recreate these moments; we have only to plant a silvery night garden, keep a Phalaenopsis orchid on our desk at work, and fill every available nook and cranny with annuals and perennials that will color our world. Even those new to gardening can have that woodland paradise in their own back yard by planting a moss garden. In fact, since moss thrives in shade, it's the perfect substitute for a lawn that you've had difficulty in keeping healthy due to lack of light! Large shade trees such as maple, oak, or ash often are challenges to the quest for a uniformly green lawn. Here moss is the ideal replacement for turf grass. If you are a sufferer of grass allergies, get rid of the watery eyes, itchy throat and sneezing by planting pollen-free moss. Our gardens should be our sanctuaries, our at-home vacation spots that give us assuagement from our daily stresses. The color green has been proven to reduce stress, and moss provides the widest range of vibrant, revitalizing greens in Nature. As the Japanese have known for centuries, moss gardens add serenity and a timeless quality to your garden that will result in eliciting a calm, contemplative state of mind.

An increasingly desirable, low-maintenance alternative to grass lawns, moss is also perfect for rock gardens, water gardens, ponds, fern gardens, or as an unusual ground cover in shady areas. With over 15,000 species of moss growing on Earth, these easy-to-grow plants are bryophytes, non-vascular plants that do not produce flowers or seeds, and are easily planted on rocks or bare soil. With rhizoids rather than roots, they don't ask for much when you are choosing where to plant, and in return provide erosion control and rapid reproduction. Moss is not affected by temperatures, other than to slow its growth during the hottest and driest months of the year. In fact, moss can dry out and remain dormant until the next rain, seldom dying completely. It is because of this that sphagnum moss covers 1% of the Earth's surface!

Here we will examine four mosses, each of which will thrive in a different venue. Fern moss (Thuidium) is a medium green moss that is perfect for heavy foot traffic. Low-growing, it will tolerate some dappled sunlight, but loves the shade. Perfect for beneath vined pergolas. Cushion moss (Leucobryum) is the choice for your planting beds, with its light green color that sports a silver-white cast. It grows well in sandy soil, and will tolerate some partial sun, but does not take well to being trod upon. Haircap moss (Polytrichum) prefers medium shade and well-drained soil. It anchors with fibers that function somewhat similarly to roots, and is an upright grower with a bright green color. For your rock garden and as an accent to your water features, the moss that you remember from your woodland walks is the Rock Cap moss (Dicranum). Medium to dark green, it needs full shade, and grows on rocks and boulders. If you are planting your moss in an area where there will occasionally be patches of full sun, use the Bryum mosses, the moss most commonly found on walls or in sidewalk cracks, or Grimmia moss, another more sun-tolerant variety. A good guide is to check out your own property, find where the moss is growing, and that will tell you where conditions are optimal.

You can buy moss, but there are less expensive ways of accruing it; transplant from your own property, from public property such as sidewalk cracks, or check with your neighbors to see if they might be willing to part with some of their moss. Dig it up with a flat shovel, ensuring at least an inch of soil beneath the moss mat. If removing it from rocks, use a putty knife. To this gardener, the most amusing way to plant your moss garden is to take a clump of moss, crumble it into your blender, add 2 cups of buttermilk and 2 cups of water, and blend at the lowest speed until thoroughly mixed and the consistency of a thin milk shake, adding a little water if necessary. Paint this mixture onto rocks, or simply pour it on the ground where you'd like your moss to grow!

As with any planting, first prepare the site. Eliminate all grass before planting your moss--Glyphosate-containing herbicides such as Roundup® will kill the grass. Clear all debris such as twigs and leaves, raking clear the soil with an iron rake; then tamp the soil down, as moss objects

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to loose soil. Simply lay down the moss, tamping firmly once again, water well for 2 to 3 weeks, and avoid heavy foot traffic as it establishes. During hot dry seasons, a gentle misting will be your gift to your moss.

It may take a couple of seasons for a moss lawn to completely establish, or for your favorite boulders in your rock garden to be carpeted in green moss, but won't it have been well worth it?

## A Mailbox Garden



The idea behind a mailbox garden is to bring eye-catching color to the base of your mailbox, lamp post, or bird house pole. If planned properly, this garden should be able to cheerfully greet visitors season after season. For a truly spectacular garden, make sure to include plants with flowers that bloom at different seasons, cover the entire color spectrum and/or have interesting foliage or year-round interest.

It takes some pretty tough plants to put up with the harsh growing conditions surrounding a street-side mailbox. Because most mailbox locations are surrounded by pavement, this special garden takes plants that thrive in full sun and can tolerate heat and drought.

With the exception of perhaps one taller focal plant or a vine that wraps around the post, most plants in a mailbox garden should be varieties that stay under 2' in height. This way you don't block the view of your home or interfere with backing out of the driveway.

Before planting, prepare the area. Shape the bed, remove any existing weeds or sod, then dig down at least 6-8 inches and turn over the soil, mixing in a soil amendment 50/50 with the existing soil. Add a starter fertilizer to the entire area. This will mix into the soil when you plant your plants.

Remember, it takes 3-4 months for most plants to get established. For best results, water regularly and feed every few months during the growing season with a good flower food and your plants will reward you with long-lasting beauty.



A flower garden, dangling like a colorful jeweled earring from the eave of your home. Yes, a hanging floral bouquet, the hanging basket--filled full to the brim with flowers and plants from the season, whether that is spring, summer or fall.

A design concept is important for you to consider when building your own hanging basket. You will need to choose a style or theme. For example, perhaps you want all of the same kinds of plants or flowers, or you might choose to have a single color scheme, while others might choose complementary colors or contrasting colors. A hanging basket with all flowers can be fun, and a mixed basket with flowers and foliage plants can be even more interesting.

A hanging basket makes a wonderful statement when it contains both upright and trailing plants. Make sure, however, that the plants that you choose for the upright feature will remain within the scale of the container that you have chosen.

Did we mention containers? There are many choices of containers, too. Wire baskets lined with moss, plastic pots with built in hangers, pots hanging with woven ropes--your ultimate choice will depend on the look that you are creating.

So, you've decided upon your theme, have an idea of the plants that you want and have chosen the container. Excellent. Next you need to prepare your potting mix. Select a high quality potting mix and mix in a controlled-release fertilizer to give it a good start. Also, remember that moisture retention is frequently a problem with hanging baskets (and all containers, for that matter), so mix

in a soil polymer that will hold on to the moisture between waterings.

If you have chosen to create a succulent hanging basket, you will need cactus mix, but probably not the slow-release fertilizer or the moisture polymer.

Planting is the next step. Fill your container about 2/3 to 3/4 full with the potting mixture. Carefully remove your new plants from their nursery containers and place them in the container. Don't hesitate to move them around until you are thrilled with the arrangement. Keep in mind which ones are upright growers, and place them in the center. Trailing flowers/plants should be near the edge, of course.

Once the plants are arranged to your satisfaction, fill in between plants with your potting mixture and water well. Remember that, even if you did use the moisture retention polymer, containers dry out far more quickly than plants in the ground. You will need to water several times a week or even more frequently in hot weather.

What's next, you wonder? Watching your own creative design grow to maturity.



**This Week's Question:**

What makes the bristlecone pine unique?

**This Week's Prize:**

Espoma Organic Potting Mix



- Contains Myco-tone® mycorrhizae
- For all indoor and outdoor containers.
- In 4, 8, 16 qt., 1 and 2 cu. ft. bags.

[Click Here to Answer](#)

**Last Week's Question:**

What does the name of the Hydrangea tell you about its care?

**Last Week's Prize:**

Espoma Organic Potting Mix

**Last Week's Winner:**

Ann Russell

**Last Week's Answer:**

The plant needs to be watered on a regular basis.

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:

### Caribbean Sweet Potato Salad



**What You'll Need:**

- 1 large russet potato, peeled and quartered
- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and quartered
- 1 cup corn
- 1 teaspoon prepared Dijon-style mustard
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cucumber, halved lengthwise and chopped
- 1/2 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup finely chopped peanuts

**Step by Step:**

- Place the russet potato pieces into a large saucepan, and cover with salted water. Bring to a boil, turn the heat down, and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Add the sweet potato, and cook about 15 minutes more. Remove a piece of each potato, and cut it in half to see if it is cooked enough.
- Once the potatoes are tender, add corn kernels; cook another 30 seconds. Drain through a colander.
- Fill the saucepan with cold water, and drop vegetables into water. Cool for 5 minutes, and drain.
- In a large bowl, whisk together mustard, lime juice, cilantro, and garlic. Slowly whisk in oil. Mix in salt and black pepper.
- Cut cooled potatoes into 1 inch cubes, and add to dressing along with cucumber and red onion. Toss well.
- Serve at room temperature or chilled.
- Toss the peanuts in just before serving.

Yield: 5 servings



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