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Edition 11.19	Paul Parent Garden Club News	May 12, 2011
 <p style="text-align: center;">FEATURED QUOTE :</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"In order to live off a garden, you practically have to live in it." ~Frank McKinney Hubbard</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto 20px auto;"></div> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Veggie Maker Organic Grow Box</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">□</p> <p>Veggie Maker Organic Grow Box</p> <p>Grow 16 tomato plants or other vegetables in this container.</p> <p>Patented 25 gallon grow box measuring 2' by 2' that will grow vegetables for years to come.</p> <p>The garden you have always wanted in less than 4 square feet, great for decks, patios, or small apartment porches.</p> <p>12 grow side ports and surface area that will support 16 or more vegetable plants.</p> <p>KoKo Pro organic expandable and reusable soil, the perfect ratio of aeration, drainage, and moisture retention--up to 50% more water than conventional potting soil.</p> <p>Tomato Maker Organic Fertilizer that feeds the plants and prevents blossom-end rot.</p> <p>This planter makes it impossible to overwater--even for the beginning gardener.</p> <p>Available at your local garden center or call Organic Laboratories at 772-286-5581 for more information.</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto 20px auto;"></div> <p>If you ask a gardener what the most fragrant plant in their garden is, the answer would most likely be the lilac plant. The lilac is a longtime favorite for most gardeners and it was even grown in the gardens of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Be sure to see some of the original lilac in their gardens when you visit their homes when the season is right for them to bloom. Lilacs are unique plants; if cared for properly and planted in the right spot, they will live for hundreds of years. Lilacs date back to the mid 1700s and were planted in our first botanical gardens and arboretums across the colonies.</p> <p>Growing up in New England, I can always remember the lilacs at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston/Brookline. These gardens are part of Harvard University, and the oldest public arboretum in North America. When the lilacs come into bloom the fragrance of the hundreds of lilacs in the garden is carried through the entire garden. Mother's day was lilac Sunday--the official beginning of the festival in the gardens. If you have time, be sure to see all the different varieties and colors of lilacs in the gardens of Harvard University. If the weather stays cool and the rains are not too strong, you will have two weeks to see the show. Call for information at 617-522-1086 for time and lilac updates.</p> <p>If you want to grow lilacs, select a location in your yard with full sun all day, though there are some varieties that will also tolerate a bit of shade. These varieties will have smaller and fewer flowers on the plants due to the shade. Sunshine is the number one reason your lilacs may not be</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Gifts for the Gardener</p> <p>Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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>Regular Phone Hours: Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</p> <p>Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Have a Look Around Our Website:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div> <p style="text-align: center;">Subscribe to our newsletter!</p> <p>Click here to subscribe, unsubscribe or change your address.</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto 20px auto;"></div>

flowering. Next to sunshine, ask what is the type of soil on your property and how it can affect the development of flowers? Lilacs prefer a rich soil that is well drained and *never* has standing water around it at any time of the year. One last piece to the puzzle is the pH or acidity level in your soils; lilacs do much better in a sweet soil than an acidic soil.

All soils can be changed by adding soil conditioners to them like peat moss, compost, animal manure, and even sand. If you can open up the soil and improve the texture of the soil, your plant will thrive. Sand will break apart the clay in your soils, allowing better air movement; peat moss will help hold moisture in a sandy soil that typically dries out during the heat of summer. Compost and animal manure will do both, plus help to make poor soil healthier and better able to hold nourishment and water.

If the soil around the lilacs contains clay, treat the area with a soil conditioner like Garden Gypsum from Soil Logic. In just a few weeks, your soil will expand and drainage will be greatly improved. For acidic soil, add lime stone, wood ashes or Magic-Cal from Jonathan Green to sweeten the soil and free up the phosphorus in your soil. Look at the ground in the area where you want to plant a new lilac. If you see moss growing, it is a signal that the soil is acidic and you will have to add soil sweeteners to help the lilac grow and flower. If you have an established plant that is not flowering very well and moss is growing in the area, apply soil sweeteners in the spring and fall until the plant begins to flower.

Lilacs will also grow better if you can remove the grass growing around the plant and create a mulch bed 2 to 3 feet in diameter at the base of the plant. Grass and weeds will rob the plant of moisture during the summer and nutrition during the growing season; this competition will limit the plant's ability to make new shoots at the base of the plant. A layer of bark mulch 2 to 3 inches thick will go a long way toward helping your plants prosper.

When the plants are young, it is very important to remove faded flowers from the plant. This cleaning prevents the plant from using its energy to make useless seed pods, and that energy will be used to make additional foliage on the plant. Pruning is also very important on both young and established plants, as it will stimulate new growth on the plant.

The best time to prune your lilac is when the plant has finished flowering or, in the case of no flowers on your plant, when the lilacs in the neighborhood are in bloom. Do not be scared to prune, as pruning will stimulate new growth and that is where the flower buds will develop during the summer. Say to your lilac, "I am doing this for your own good." Begin by removing any dead or damaged branches from the plant. You should remove 1/3 of the foliage on the taller growing branches. If some branches are very tall, cut them to your waist and leave this tall stump in the clump. Strong plants will develop new growth in the shape of a broom from this stump, and in just a couple of years these new shoots will be in bloom. You can also cut the branch to a foot from the ground and shoots will develop on it also.

Older plants can be rejuvenated by removing 1/3 of the branches each year for three years and allowing the new shoots that develop at the base to take over the plant. Those new shoots that develop at the base should be thinned by 1/3. You should remove the small, weak looking ones, keeping the thick and strong looking shoots to replace the older branches.

New lilac plants should be planted with compost and mycorrhizae to help the plant get established quickly before the heat of summer arrives. Water 2 times a week until the fall and fertilize the plant in September with mycorrhizae again.

The only problem lilacs have is powdery mildew on the foliage, and that can be prevented with 2 or 3 applications of Serenade organic fungicide beginning in mid-June and repeated every two weeks. Good air circulation around the plant and keeping plants away from irrigation systems that splash water on the foliage will prevent this problem.

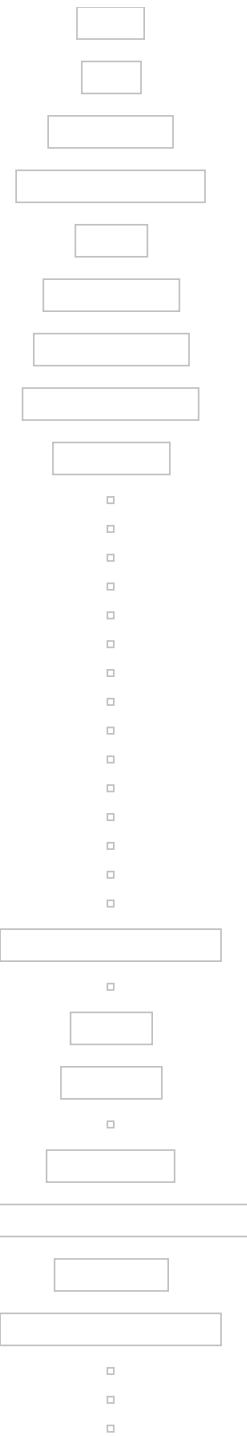
If you like lilacs, look for a new hybrid variety just introduced this spring called 'Bloomerang.' This new variety will give you months of flowers, not just weeks, as it is a repeat bloomer. It will flower in the spring for several weeks and, if you can remove the faded flowers, it will re-bloom in the mid-summer until frost. The beautiful fragrant flowers are lavender, and are great for cutting also. The plant will grow five feet tall and just as wide, very similar to the 'Miss Kim' hybrid; the flowers and foliage look similar also. This is a wonderful plant to have near a deck or patio where you spend time outside during the summer.

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Back in the days when this country was considered "The Colonies," our gardeners exported phlox plants to Great Britain. That's right, North America is the home to the entire phlox family of plants. Of the 70 species of phlox available, all but one is native. The botanical name for phlox in Greek means "flame," because the plants grew flowers in bright hot-looking colors. If you were a botanist, you would call the flower that the phlox makes a "salverform" bloom. A simple definition of "salverform" is a tiny tube-like flower that opens into a trumpet-shaped flared or flattened face with five petals. Most species produce these flowers in clusters that are rounded and believe it or not, even the ground phlox produces flowers in this rounded flower cluster. Next time you're out in your garden, lift up a side shoot from your clump and look closely at the flowers. What looks to be a carpet of single flowers is really small clusters of flowers covering the plant--check it out.

When most gardeners think of phlox they think of the tall-growing phlox with beautiful ice-cream cone shaped flower clusters. They think of the warm summer nights with cool colors of lavender-blue, purple, mauve, pink red and white flowers standing up tall your garden. Summer-flowering phlox is nice, but to me the ground covering varieties are more exciting, because at this time of the



year color in the perennial garden is still very limited. Most perennials are still dormant or just beginning to poke through the soil, but this wonderful plant is in full bloom. Not only that, but the perennial ground phlox is evergreen to semi-evergreen, and on those cold winter days when snow is not covering the ground the phlox is greener than your lawn. The ground phlox will tolerate temperatures down to -40 to -50 degrees--how many of your perennial flowers can tolerate that and stay green all winter long? Not many!

Ground phlox grow like a carpet, hugging the ground. They are creepers, covering even rocks in your garden and creating a mat of foliage that will cascade or trail over a short wall. Ground phlox will grow on or over any surface as well as obstacles; truly a unique flowering plant. During April we all crave color and the weather can still be cold and unsettled, but this plant does develop flowers that will stay in bloom on the plant even if the temperatures dip below freezing. For this to happen, your plant must have good drainage; otherwise it will suffer from root rot during cold, wet weather. The roots of the ground phlox grow don't grow very deep in the garden. If your soil is on the sandy side you may have to water during the summer months if the plant is growing in full sun or the summer is hot and dry.

Ground phlox will flower for 2 to 3 weeks during April or early May. In a more northerly growing area the spring time temperatures always determine the flowering time. When plants finish flowering, shear back the plant to help control the size of the plant and encourage it to stay full and thick. As the plant ages, it will begin to die out in the center; that is normal. Dig it up, divide the plant into sections, and remove the dead sections from the clump. Plant the outer edges as clumps, with fresh soil that you have conditioned with compost or animal manure. If you can add mycorrhizae when planting, it will help stimulate the new roots to form more quickly and the summer weather will help new growth to develop.

Ground phlox flowers come in shades of white, pink, purple, red, lavender-blue and a new hybrid pink and white striped variety called "Candy Stripe." This plant can spread 2 to 3 feet wide and will grow to 6 to 9 inches tall. When the flowers fall the Kelly green foliage will begin to grow, it can spread 6 inches or more each summer. When you plant a young plant, the foliage will feel soft and smooth but as the plant ages, the foliage gets prickly and becomes needle-like, almost like a spruce tree. The once soft and flexible green stems will also get woody, turn brown, rough, and more rigid. This is your signal to divide the plant into small clumps 6 to 8 inches in diameter.

A soil that is slightly acidic to alkaline will work well to encourage new growth and many flowers. If your garden is near oaks and pines, I would suggest that you apply lime, wood ash, or Jonathan Green Mag-I-Cal every year to keep acidity levels down. Fertilize in the spring when the flowers begin to fade with a good perennial fertilizer such as Flower-Tone or a Dr. Earth flower fertilizer with Pro-Biotic.

If you plant ground phlox in the front of your border, it will creep out into your lawn if not pruned after flowering. Grass will also grow into your flower bed from the edge and can create a problem if you do not edge the perennial bed every year. If the grass gets into the plant bed it may be necessary to dig it up and manually pull the grass and its roots from the clump. It is best to set plants 12 inches from the edge of the bed to prevent problems.

If you have a steep bank that is difficult to mow and you're looking for a ground cover, the ground phlox could be the right plant for you. Space plants on 18 inch centers in staggered rows and in a couple of years it will all grow together, creating a wonderful flowering hillside in the spring. When the flowers fade use the lawn mower to cut back the plants to keep them short and thick growing. Fertilize over the top of the foliage with organic fertilizer when rain is in the forecast or use your sprinkler to wash the food off the foliage into the ground.

Insects and disease problems are minimal, but if you see the foliage begin to bleach out a bit, it could be red spider mites. If this occurs spray the foliage with Tree and Shrub Systemic Insecticide to control the problem. The ground phlox does not get powdery mildew like the taller growing summer-flowering phlox does. Powdery mildew is the most destructive disease of the taller growing relative and many people do not grow phlox because of it. New resistant varieties are now available and better systemic fungicides are also available. If you want spring color that will brighten up your gardens at this time of the year there is no better plant than the ground phlox. Enjoy!

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Gardeners beware! The beetles have invaded America again! Not the singing Beatles from Liverpool, England, but this time the beetles that are native to Europe and Asia have entered the United States from Montreal, Canada. These beetles (also known as scarlet lily beetles and lily leaf beetles) were first spotted in gardens in Montreal in 1945; quietly they moved south until they were spotted in a garden in Cambridge, Mass in 1992. Today they are everywhere and if your love lilies as much as I do, be prepared for the invasion. This is a tough insect because it will thrive in a climate where winter temperatures drop as cold as -20 to -30 degrees.

The adult Asiatic red lily beetle is bright red, and at first sight it is often confused with the common ladybug. This small beetle will grow 1/4 to 3/8 inches long and has a hard shell covering its body. The head, legs, antennae, and the undersurface are all black. The body is more rectangular in shape than rounded like the lady bug. It is also a very strong flyer and can move quickly when you try to pick it while it is feeding on your plants. It can hide in small cracks and crevices in the foliage of your lilies when startled.

The adult will lay rows of yellow to orange-red eggs on the underside of the lily leaves from March to June. Some times as many as 30 or more eggs can be found on the underside of the leaf where

they hide undetected. When they hatch in 7 to 10 days, they develop into a rather unpleasant looking slug-like creature 3/8 inches long that can be brown, yellow, or orange with a black head. You may not notice the color of this BEAST, because to help protect itself from predators (including you) it will cover itself with its own excrement. This is known as fecal shield, and from talking to many of you--it works. Many of you are reluctant to pick them off your plant at this stage but this is the most destructive time in the pest's life.

This larval stage will last 2 to 3 weeks, and it will eat its weight in foliage every day. It will begin with foliage and when all of that is eaten, it will move to the flower buds. It will then drop to the garden soil where it will pupate, rest, and emerge from the soil in about two weeks as an adult beetle, ready to start the cycle again. When the weather gets warm in mid-summer, the adults will dig their way back into the garden and sleep in the soil and plant debris until the following spring. The following spring they will emerge looking for food and a mate and start the cycle of destruction all over again.

This beetle, if uncontrolled, will destroy your lily plants in just one season. The destruction cycle begins early, as the beetles begins the feeding and mating frenzy on the fritillaria – that wonderful orange or yellow flowering bulb from Holland. Other native plants are also attacked, but when the lilies emerge from the garden in April this beetle quickly moves to them. All liliium species are eaten, including the Asiatic, Oriental, tiger lily, and the Easter lily. The beetle will not bother the daylilies in your garden, as they are a different family of plants and not a true lily. If you have Solomon's Seal in your garden, check it also, as the beetles will feed on its foliage. Turk's cap lilies are eaten as well, and some varieties of nicotiana, known as "flowering tobacco," a wonderful annual flowering plant.

Controlling the Asiatic red leaf beetle can be easily accomplished by handpicking the beetle from the plant every day as you see them. The adult beetle will squeak if squeezed gently, but I recommend that you squeeze hard and crush this pest! Or pick them off your plants and drop them in a container of soapy water and flush down the toilet--a great ending for them. If you only have a few lilies in your garden it will not be a problem if you stay vigilant and check the plants daily. But if you have many plants in the garden, natural or chemical control products will have to be used.

A natural product such as neem oil can kill and repel the adult beetles from your garden if you apply it a couple times a week to your plants. Neem oil is natural but, like all natural products, will break down quickly with rain and bright warm sunshine on the plant. Neem oil is a bio-pesticide, and is extracted from the seed of the neem tree, found growing in southeast Asia. Neem oil will control both the adult and the larval forms of the Asiatic red lily beetle. If used regularly on your lily plants, it will also work as a repellent for egg-laying adult beetles. Neem oil is available at your local garden center or nursery. Mother nature has not provided any known predators for this insect.

Chemically this insect is best and more effectively controlled with a product called "Tree and Shrub," which is available at your local garden center or nursery. The active ingredient is imidacloprid insecticide; once it is absorbed into the plant's sap systems it will protect your plants for a full year. It is best applied as a soil drench around the new lily shoots as they emerge from the garden or when you first see the beetles on the plant. It will also control other leaf and flower eating insects that threaten the plant during the growing season in your garden. Applying the product as a soil drench will also reduce the chance of drift to non-threatened plants in your garden and prevent harm to beneficial insects in your garden. Tree and Shrub was developed by Bayer Advanced and one application will protect the plants for the entire year. If your time in the garden is limited, this is the best way to prevent damage to your plants.

A new product just released from Bonide Lawn and Garden is called "Beetle Killer" has pyrethroids as active ingredients. This product will also kill Japanese beetles, the stink bug, and the Asian lady bug that will soon arrive to your home and garden.

Whichever product you decide to use, follow the recommendations on the label and get the product on the plant or in the soil early, now. This beast will destroy all your lilies in just one year if do not act now.

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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.](#)



This Week's Question:

If you've ever seen okra in bloom, you'll know that it has a beautiful flower. It was once misclassified as "Hibiscus esculentus" and is still sometimes referred to that way. It is in the same family as hibiscus but it is not a hibiscus. What is the correct genus of okra?

[Click Here to Answer](#)

This Week's Prize:

Espoma Organic Seed Starter Mix



- Contains Myco-tone® mycorrhizae
- For all seedlings and cuttings.
- Promotes Root Growth.
- In 8 and 16 qt. bags.

Last Week's Question

Why don't botanists consider a strawberry to be a true berry?

Last Week's Winner:

Jean York

Last Week's Answer:

A berry is a fruit that is entirely made from one ovary of the plant. However, strawberry "fruit" is partially created by the tissue near the ovaries, so it's accessory fruit and not a berry. What we "see" as the strawberry seeds are actually achenes, a dry fruit containing a single seed.

Last Week's Prize:

Espoma Organic Seed Starter Mix

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:

Strawberry Spinach Salad



Ingredients:

- 2 bunches spinach, rinsed and torn into bite-size pieces
- 4 cups sliced strawberries
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds

Step by Step:

- In a large bowl, toss together the spinach and strawberries.

- In a medium bowl, whisk together the oil, vinegar, sugar, paprika, sesame seeds, and poppy seeds. Pour over the spinach and strawberries, and toss to coat.

Yield: 8 servings



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