

**From:** Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>  
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Edition 11.22	Paul Parent Garden Club News	June 2, 2011
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Featured Quote:</b> Flowers are sunshine, food and medicine to the soul. ~ Luther Burbank</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Soil Moist Granules</b></p> <p>Soil Moist has been developed to reduce the amount of water needed to maintain vigorous plants and other green goods. When mixed in the soil, the crystals will soften and swell as water is added and absorbed. When the potting system dries, the polymer will release its water to the plant. Soil Moist acts as a water reservoir--even during periods of drought the stored water is released to the plant. The expansion and retraction of the polymer during the watering cycle helps soil aeration, which is important to all plants.</p> <p>Note: Soil Moist must be incorporated into the soil at the root level of the plant/green good. Do not top dress or place on the surface. Should be kept out of drains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• stores over 200 times its weight in tap water</li><li>• releases a steady supply of water as your plants need it</li><li>• non-toxic, safe and economical to use</li><li>• reduces plant watering by 50%**</li><li>• reduces transplant shock</li><li>• lasts several seasons**</li></ul> <p>**Results may vary depending on soil conditions such as salt, pH, microorganisms, and on UV light.</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p>I love the Greeks because they have a god or a connection to a god's name for everything that grows on this planet called Earth. The Greek goddess "Iris" is said to have created the rainbow, a bridge to connect heaven and Earth. The Iris plant family, which has hundreds of colors and many varieties, was chosen to carry her name by the elders in the heavens. Because of this accomplishment, the elders gave Iris a magic potion that when poured on the Earth would produce a flower garden of rainbow color flowers.</p> <p>She was so eager to begin her new task of creating a flower garden of colorful flowers that she forgot to empty the entire vial. The few drops that remained in the vial were reds and that is why that today we have no true red flowers in our garden. It goes to show that even the gods were not perfect.</p> <p>Iris plants have been growing in gardens around the world for over 4000 years. The Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians all grew these plants for their flowers and for medical remedies. Pottery and art found from those periods have pictures of these flowers on them in a garden setting and its use to treat fever, chills, and coughs with its dried tubers, not recommended today as the plant is considered poisonous. So if you have iris plants in your garden or are thinking of purchasing them to add to your garden, remember this story to tell your fellow gardeners, because these are plants with a story behind them.</p> <p>Because there are hundreds of varieties of iris to choose from, I have chosen the bearded iris today to tell you about, as they have the most colorful flowers and the most color combination of flowers in the iris plant family. The bearded iris is also the most popular and I think the best one for you to start with and grow in your perennial garden today. Iris plants will catch your eye when in bloom, they are easy to grow in your garden, require minimum care, and they multiply quickly</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gifts for the Gardener</b></p> <p><a href="#">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p><b>E-Mail:</b> <a href="#">Click to contact us.</a></p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p><b>Fax:</b> (207) 985-6972</p> <p><b>Address:</b> Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p><b>Regular Phone Hours:</b> Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Have a Look Around Our Website:</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Subscribe to our newsletter!</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here to subscribe, unsubscribe or change your address.</a></p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>

and are easy to divide and make new plants. Also the foliage, no other plant has foliage like the iris.

The bearded iris will grow best in a well-drained soil that has been conditioned before planting in it. The richer the soil, the larger the plant will grow, the larger the flowers will be on the plant and the more flowers will form on the individual stems. The better prepared soil will also hold more moisture in it without being wet! This will also help the flowers last longer when in bloom.

Heavy, clay type soils or a garden that get watered daily from a sprinkler system will create problems for the plant, so keep plants out of wet areas or your plants will rot easily. Dry soils are best for this plant to grow in. If your soil is sandy or a light loam, set the rhizome in the garden and just barely cover the rhizome with a bit of soil over it. If your soil is heavy or has clay in it, be sure to just barely cover the rhizome with soil; when watered it should be completely visible and sitting on top of the ground. Plants prefer a full sun location but will tolerate a bit of late day shade.

What is an iris? An iris is a plant that grows from a horizontal growing rhizome. A rhizome is a fattened, creeping stem with grass-like foliage at one end and roots that grow underneath this stem. If you care for the plant properly, this original rhizome will make two new rhizomes at the end of each year. One new rhizome will develop on each side of the plant and the old rhizome will transfer its energy to the two new plants and die at the end of the season. The foliage is grass-like, but very wide at the base near the rhizome, 1.5 to 2 inches, and slims down to a point at the tip. The foliage will grow from 12 to 18 inches tall each spring and has a blue green color to it. This foliage will grow in the shape of a fan and spread as wide as 12 inches in the early summer. The plant looks like a foot sitting on the surface of the soil with a fan of foliage on the heel of the plant.

Plant irises in the late summer or early fall after they have finished flowering. Space plants 12 to 18 inches apart between plants. Work compost, animal manure or fresh garden soil together to create a soil that will be 8 to 12 inches deep for planting. Mix in organic fertilizer and mycorrhizae before planting. Each plant should be a single rhizome with a fan of foliage at one end.

Before planting be sure to squeeze the rhizome and feel it all over to make sure it is firm all around. Soft rhizomes should be discarded as they could have an insect problem: an insect called a "borer." If you have them in your rhizomes as a soft spot cut, them out and dispose of the infected rhizome. When you re-plant your garden bed, add Bonide Lawn and Garden Eight Granules insecticide to prevent future problems in your planting bed.

The flowers immerge from the fan of foliage on a tall growing, pencil-thick, strong stem during June. Each stem can produce 3 to 5 elegant flowers that will last for up to a week each, depending on the weather and outside temperature during the flowering time. Cloudy and cool temperatures will extend the flowering time while sunny, hot weather with wind can decrease the flowering time of each flower to just a couple of days. The iris will open just one flower on the stem at a time and as one fades a new bloom will begin to open.

Each flower will grow 4 to 6 inches tall and wide. Each flower has 3 lower petals in the shape of your tongue that will hang down with a small beard of tiny hairs running vertically in the center of the petals. Also on the flower you will find 3 upper tongue-shaped flower petals that will grow upright together like the petals of a tulip; they have no beard-like growth on them, making the overall flower very unique looking. The top and bottom flower petals can be the same color or the top petals can be one color and the lower petals another color. No other plant can produce flowers this way or with so many color possibilities.

Fertilize each spring with compost around the rhizome but not covering it. Mycorrhizae is best for the plant when blended with an organic fertilizer, and will encourage more growth and flowers. When the flowers fade in late June, remove the flower stem to the base of the rhizome to prevent seed production and encourage new rhizome development. In the fall cut the foliage in half and remove any dead foliage present on the plant.

If you have had problems with borers in the past remember that the borer moth will lay the eggs on the foliage of your irises in the late summer or early fall. The eggs overwinter on the old foliage and emerge in the spring as a caterpillar type insect and eat their way into your new foliage. As they mature they will eat their way down into your rhizome and grow to 1 to 2 inches long. Soon they will pupate in the surrounding soil and emerge as a moth a few weeks later starting the cycle anew.

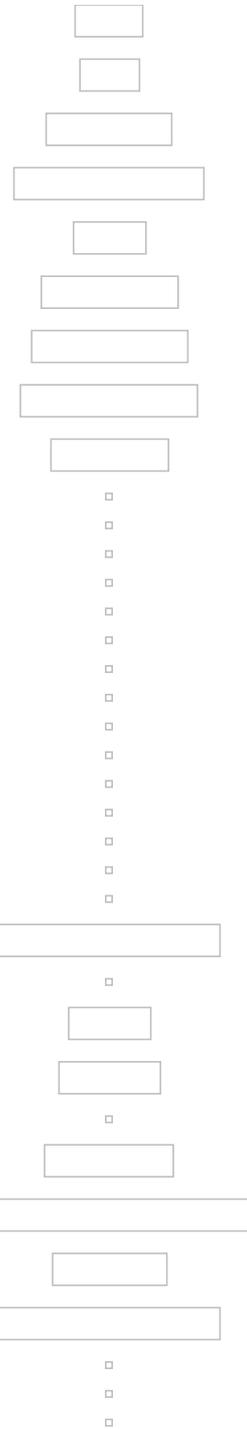
The best way to prevent this from happening is to remove all the foliage from the rhizome in the late fall once the ground has frozen. By removing the foliage you remove the problem, and the plant will replace the missing foliage in the spring. An application of Bayer Systemic Tree and Shrub insecticide will also control the borer in your rhizomes when applied in the spring or fall season. Keep the plants clean at all times and dispose of dead or dying foliage, faded flowering stems and infected rhizomes. Iris plants should be divided every 2 to 3 years and checked for borers every year. By dividing every 2 to 3 years your plants will grow better and have more flowers on them.

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If you have a blank wall, on one side of the house or garage where nothing seems to grow because of the shade, I have a plant for you to consider. How would you like to hide a retaining wall, an ugly wood or metal chain-link fence, a stone or brick fireplace, or even an outcropping stony ledge on your property?

The plant I have chosen for you is the climbing hydrangea. You will love it. This plant is the king of



flowering vines because of the foliage, the flowers, its ability to climb "anything," the ease of care and lack of overall problems with insects and disease. This little known but widely available plant will make your garden the talk of the neighborhood.

The foliage of the climbing hydrangea is a rich dark green color, smooth, a bit shiny and grows on long 1 to 3 inch stems. The leaf is almost rounded with an oval point on the tip and it will mature to 2 to 4 inches long and wide. The edge of the leaf is etched with small pointed teeth and the veins in the leaf are noticeable and interesting to look at.

This vine is completely covered with foliage from the ground up; with so many leaves on it, the plant will completely cover anything it is growing on. Fall color is not anything special, just a bit on the yellow side. These leaves develop in early spring and last well into the fall season.

The flowers are a show stopper as they develop on top of the beautiful leaves as their back ground. Each flower can grow 6 to 10 inches in diameter on short stems that lift them off the foliage to display them better. The flowers are a pure creamy white color and fragrant when in full bloom. The flowers buds begin to form in late May and once opened will last most of June and July.

Each flower cluster has two types of flowers in the cluster, small fertile, fragrant, star-like flowers 1/4 inch in diameter or smaller, that fill the center of the cluster. The outer edge of the flower cluster is single row of sterile, four-petaled, 3/4 to 1 inch wide flowers. These larger flowers provide the color to draw the bees to them for pollination. These large flower clusters are almost flat, not rounded like most hydrangeas we have in our garden. As the flowers age, they will fade to green and then brown before falling from the plant.

The climbing hydrangea's ability to climb on any surface is wonderful and no trellis or staking is ever needed. Just point the branches in the direction you want them to grow or temporarily tape the branches to the surface with a piece of duct tape and they will quickly fill in that space. As the stems grow, they will also develop a strong anchoring roots system that will stick to any surface the plant is growing on. Once attached to that surface it is very difficult to remove the plant from the surface.

The new growth will be pale green in color and flexible, but as it ages, the new growth will become strong and woody. The branches will become deep brown, but with time this bark will begin to exfoliate like a birch tree does and this ragged looking bark will give it much character during the winter months.

The climbing hydrangea will thrive best in a soil that stays moist at all times so when you plant be sure to condition the soil with compost, animal manure or peat moss. If your soil is on the sandy side add Soil Moist granules to help hold moisture around the plant while it is getting established in your garden. It will grow in most soils except those that stay wet or have standing water during the winter months.

Also use mycorrhizae to help the root system develop faster, as this plant is slow to develop in the first couple years in your garden. Once the plant is established in the garden, the flowers will form but it will take a couple of years for that to happen--that is why I suggest you use mycorrhizae at the time of planting. Covering the planting bed with 2 to 3 inches of bark mulch or Sweet Peat will help hold water in the soil during the hot days of summer.

Insects and disease problems are rare, making it almost trouble free. The plant is very strong and once established in your garden it will last for many years without any care. The first 2 to 3 years fertilize the plant spring and fall with Plant-Tone or Dr. Earth Shrub fertilizer with Pro Biotic to help get the plant established.

The first 2 to 3 years the plant will not make much new growth unless you feed it and keep it moist at all times, but once it is established you can expect up to 3 feet or more of new growth each year. The same requirements are needed with the flower and once it is established it will be covered with blooms--but early on do not expect much of a show from the plant.

You can also plant the climbing hydrangea on the side of a steep hill and watch it quickly fill in the area as a ground cover. Space plants 10 feet apart and in just a few years, erosion problems are history. Just be sure to apply a nice thick layer of bark mulch on the soil until the plants can take over. If you have a wooded lot with large trees that have had the lower branches removed to let in light, you might want to plant a single climbing hydrangea plant at the base of each tree for a wonderful show of color during the summer months.

A climbing hydrangea will climb the tree very easily and grow to the height of 50 feet or more without hurting the tree it is growing on. The climbing hydrangea will use the tree as support to grow on, just like a trellis and the flowers will develop from the ground to the top of the tree.

This is the best plant to cover up old rusted chain-link fences and give you privacy at the same time. Plant a single plant at the base of each post--or 10 feet between plants--and in 3 years, your fence will become a wonderful green hedge with white flowers. Climbing hydrangea will also grow in the sun as long as you mulch properly and keep damp during the early years while it is getting established. Enjoy!!

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Peppers come from all over the world, in a wide range of colors, shapes, sizes, and flavors, so why did we grow up eating green peppers only? I am guessing that we grew up with the green bell peppers in our gardens because most greenhouses in those days chose to grow just the green bell varieties and we were never exposed to the colored varieties. Also, many older

gardeners like us came from large families and the colored peppers were more expensive at the supermarket. When peppers were called for in recipes green bell peppers were used to save money. Growing up in Northern New England, I was told that our growing season was too short, the peppers would not have time to change color and ripen properly, so we were eating an unripened vegetable like green tomatoes.

Today's gardener loves variety, and if we can grow more colorful vegetables in the garden, it will bring excitement to our kitchen for the cook and the dinner table. Colored peppers are ripe peppers and will taste sweeter, are more flavorful, and higher in vitamins content. Before you go crazy and plant all the unique colored peppers in your garden this spring, buy a few different colored peppers at the supermarket and use them in your recipes.

Eat peppers that are fresh and raw in your salads or with dips. Substitute colored peppers where you once used green peppers and enjoy different taste and flavors. In the garden colored peppers need the same growing conditions, just more time to ripen.

Here are a few things to know about growing peppers in your garden. First thing to know is that peppers should always be grown in blocks and never in just a single row. Pepper plants grow better if the leaves touch each other when mature. They seem to like each other's company and this block type of growing protects the fruit they will produce from the hot summer sun, preventing sunburn of the fruit.

Never put peppers out in the garden until the soil has warmed up and the air temperature stays above 70 degrees. Once chilled the pepper plant will never fully recover and the fruit production will be less on the plant. If your pepper plants have flowers on them, remove the flowers when planting so the plant can concentrate on developing a root system FIRST and get established in the soil before making fruit. Plants with flowers will become less productive in your garden, so choose plants without flowers.

Set your seedlings out in the garden and space plants 18 to 24 inches apart. Peppers must have full sun all day long to grow properly and produce many fruits. Peppers love a warm to hot soil to grow in, so if you live in Northern New England or where the growing season is short, use a black landscape fabric or black plastic mulch around the plant to help heat up the soil. This will also keep out weeds and help hold water in the soil longer when it gets hot and dry. I use a self-watering landscape fabric from Evo Organics Co., and last year my peppers grew to be waist high and more productive than ever. Check out pictures of my garden at [www.paulsevogarden.com](http://www.paulsevogarden.com) and see for yourself what black fabric can do for your garden.

Peppers love a rich soil, so prepare it properly before planting. Use compost, animal manure, peat moss or seaweed kelp to help create a better growing environment. If your soil is well prepared before planting, it will hold more moisture when the plant needs it to make better fruit. A rich soil can support the microbes in the soil needed for root production and fruit set. The soil will determine the amount of fruit the plant can produce the size of the fruit and the taste of that fruit, so don't fool yourself, do it right the first time.

When you set plants out in your garden be sure to add to the plant hole a granular fertilizer, as transplants need to make a lot of vegetative growth early on to support large production of fruit. If the plants do not grow large they cannot develop good fruit. Also if fruit forms on the plant before the plant has grown a foot tall remove it and fertilize the plant again or the plant production will be minimal. Use Vegetable –Tone or Dr. Earth vegetable fertilizer with Pro-biotic, as both products contain mycorrhizae to help stimulate this much needed early growth!

Peppers love a light sandy soil that is well drained at all times. If your soil is heavy or clay-like, be sure to add extra compost or peat moss to help break it up. If your soil is on the sandy side add a pinch of Soil Moist granules to the hole when planting as they will expand 200 times in the ground and help hold moisture around the roots. Peppers love water on a weekly basis and a deep watering is preferred, so let the sprinkler run for a good 30 minutes each time you water.

Peppers are also heavy feeders and will be more productive if fed each month with a tablespoon or two to each plant of your granular fertilizer. If you're using a liquid fertilizer like Miracle –Grow or Fertilome Rooting and Blooming fertilizer, apply every 2 weeks.

Peppers do best in a soil slightly on the acid side to neutral, 5.5 to 7. If your soil is too acid, and you're your watering is uneven your fruit may develop blossom end rot on the underside of the fruit. If you had this brown rot on your fruit in the past add a bit of Tomato Maker plant food when planting or use it as a side dressing once planted. I always add lime or wood ash to the garden each fall to prevent this from happening. If you did not and your soil is on the acid side, you can add Jonathan Green Mag-I-Cal soil conditioner now as this product will do the same as lime, but change the soil acidity in just a couple of weeks.

Peppers also love magnesium, a mineral not common enough in our soil--but it can be added very easily by using Epsom salt. Just dissolve one tablespoon of Epsom salt to a gallon of water, pour over each plant to wet the foliage and soak the ground around the plant. This should be enough to keep the plant extra green all year long, and a lot more productive.

Harvest the peppers as soon as they grow to a mature size and the color you desire. If you leave ripe peppers on the plant too long, the plant will stop making new fruit and you will have few peppers for the fall season. Pick often and store extra peppers in the vegetable crisper. They will keep up to two weeks without losing their flavor or you can chop them up and freeze them for cooking later during the winter months.

Insect and disease problems are few as long as you do not water the garden after supper so the foliage remains wet during the evening hours. Wet foliage catches disease spores blowing in the air and encourages insects to visit the garden. If we should have several days of temperatures over 90 degrees, your pepper plants will drop their flowers and so will your tomatoes so don't panic, just add a bit of liquid fertilizer to the plants and new buds will quickly form on the plant.

Two last things to remember with peppers, never plant tomatoes, potatoes or eggplant in the

same area the following year or plants will suffer because they use the same nutrition as peppers. Always cut the peppers from the plant and never pull them off, and leave a short stem on the plant or you could break the branch, as the pepper stem is very strong. Now plant some peppers this spring and enjoy the different flavors of the colored peppers!

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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

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**This Week's Question:**

The official floral emblem of the United States of America is the rose. We also have a national rose month. What month?

[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**

Because of a poem, Memorial Day and Veteran's day are associated with a particular flower. What flower?

**Last Week's Winner:**

Alice Owerka

**Last Week's Answer:**

I suspect the flower is the poppy because of the poem *In Flanders Fields*. (ed. note: you suspected correctly!)

**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

# Warm Spinach and Mushroom Salad

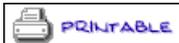
### What You'll Need:

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium shallot, finely minced
- 1 1/2 cups mushrooms, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 1/2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 10 oz. package fresh spinach, washed and dried
- 4 large basil leaves, chopped

### Step by Step:

- Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet over medium heat until warm.
- Add shallots and mushrooms, cooking until they are soft.
- Add garlic to skillet and cook, stirring until you smell the garlic, about 1-2 minutes more.
- Stir in the remaining oil, balsamic vinegar and salt and pepper, mixing well.
- Remove from heat and allow the mushroom mixture to cool until just warm, about seven minutes.
- Arrange spinach evenly in a serving bowl; cover with chopped basil. Pour the warm mushrooms over the greens and toss lightly to coat. Serve immediately.

Serves 4



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