



Really Locally Grown

We flower gardeners face an annual spring dilemma. As the seed catalogs pour in, and those songbirds start yelling their lovely heads off, we are tempted by thoughts of trugs overflowing with bright, shiny, mouth-watering fruits and vegetables. But the thought of turning over a new bed is sometimes more than we want to think about, and the visual impact of a separate vegetable plot could off-balance a carefully thought out yard. Integrating vegetables, fruits, and herbs into your flower gardens is a great way to bring interest to the beds, fill in the holes you might normally plug with annuals, supply your table with rare, tasty foods, and save some money, to boot. It may be easier than you think to find a few spots in the garden and tuck in some new friends.

What to plant? The first step is to decide what you really want to eat. What do you like to eat? What can you not get at the supermarket? Try baby carrots with melt in your mouth taste, squash blossoms, haricots verts, a bushel of real peaches, all the basil you could ever want for \$1.79, edible flowers, beautifully striped eggplant. Do you have young gardeners? Think radishes, sunflowers, and tangy nasturtiums.

Where to put it? Finding room can be as simple as removing the plants that did not over-winter successfully or by re-assigning your "annuals only" areas. You

(Continued on page 2)

April 3 Dividing Your Perennials

Just in time to sharpen your wits and your tools, and get ready for the Plant Sale! Lisa LeBlanc, from Pettengill Farm, will demonstrate how to separate your perennials to keep them healthy, blooming, and to propagate new plantings. Her extensive experience with flowering plants brings us valuable hands-on information that we can all use in our own gardens. She will be bringing plants and tools and actually demonstrating the correct methods for dividing our treasures. Check out their great website at www.pettengillfarm.com

with Ellie Bragg, Ann Burrill, Evelyn Thornton, and Anne Jarzowski



Hospitality will be provided by chairs Tracy Peter and Maguy Thomson

Inside this issue:

Gardening	Really Locally Grown	2
Gardening	Planting Partners	2
Events		3
Club News	Get Ready for Plant Sale	3
Ask Peony	April	4

Happy are herb gardeners
through all the seasons and the years.
Theirs is a life enriched
with rare fragrances to be enjoyed
at dusk and dawn and in the heat of noon.

— Adelmia Grenier Simmons

Gardening *Really Locally Grown*, cont.

(Continued from page 1)

can also create room by removing a worn out, weak, or misplaced (think plant sale!) perennial. Think, too, about vertical planting, which adds visual interest, bringing changes in height and focal points to your border. For example, put a wire teepee over your daffodils, and poke in some peas. They will not interfere with the daffs, and will help draw the eye away from the bulbs' waning foliage. Have a damp spot with really acidic soil where nothing thrives? Plant a couple of blueberry bushes.

And to really get more space, consider partnering with a friend, splitting seed packets, or sharing the over-abundance of tomatoes from your garden with the zucchini from hers.

How to improve the look? Think of the vegetables and herbs as artistic elements, which you can use to complement or spark up the look of your existing beds. In the same way that you plan your perennial borders with an eye toward color combinations sequenced over the seasons, think of your edibles as colorful, textured elements which appear and disappear in the landscape. See the table below. Everyone is advising us to eat colorful foods, rich in minerals and vitamins, and frankly, they look gorgeous on the plate. So plant red lettuce as well as green, ivory-stemmed blue-green bok choy, crimson-centered kale. Need a focal point to delight the child in everyone? Try Brussels sprouts! Want to hide an unattractive fence? Trench in a row of asparagus, stop cutting by the 4th of July, and admire the airy foliage 'til December.



Planting Partners

Alliums, valerian, yarrow, and bronze fennel to repel aphids

Put tomatoes & basil together

Put the mozzarella plant nearby

Marigolds go with veggies

Borage & basil with beans to attract needed pollinators

Thyme, hyssop, marjoram, and sage to attract bees, & hoverflies, whose larvae eat aphids

How to get good yields? Planting in squares (or circles, triangles, or amorphous clumps) gives higher yields than planting in rows because the plants are closer together, aiding pollination. As a rule, crop plants need more food than plants grown for their flowers, so prepare their soil well with lots of compost and manure. Root vegetables like carrots need very finely tilled soil to produce straight, good-looking crops. Radishes are the exception, as they will grow anywhere. Never plant mint in your garden, or you will have nothing but mint in 5 years. Put it in a pot on the deck, then surround it with barbed wire!

And lastly, don't be afraid to try something wacky, since most veggies are annuals, and will be gone next year!

I like muddling things up,
and if an herb looks nice in a border
then why not grow it there?
— Vita Sackville-West

Resources

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds 417 924-8917
www.rareseeds.com Check out the cowpeas!

Johnny's Seeds 877 564-6697 www.johnnyseeds.com
Great site, huge selection, in Maine

Seeds of Change 888 762-7333
www.seedsofchange.com All certified organic

The Total Garden: A Complete Guide to Integrating Flowers, Herbs, Fruits and Vegetables by A. M. Clevely available on Amazon, used.

	Spring	Summer	Fall
Yellow	Pansies	Dill, Yarrow, Sweet & Hot Peppers, Pears	Yarrow
Orange	Calendula	Peaches, Swiss Chard, Sweet & Hot Peppers	Nasturtiums
Red	Rhubarb, Radicchio, Lettuce	Bee Balm, Swiss Chard, Sweet & Hot Peppers, Strawberries, Tomatillos	Kale, Apples, Bread-seed Poppies, Lettuce
Purple	Lettuce, Violets	Lavender, Thyme, Eggplant, Basil, Sweet Peppers, Chives, Bergamot, Echinacea	Kale, Grapes, Lettuce
Blue	Johnny Jump-ups	Borage, Blueberries, Anise Hyssop	Kale
Silver / White		Chamomile, Chinese Cabbage, Garlic Chives, Valerian	Ornamental Kale
Texture	Rhubarb	Asparagus, Bronze Fennel, Dill, Spinach, Parsley	Kale, Parsley
Interest	Peas, Beans	Brussels Sprouts	Hops

Events

Newburyport Horticultural Society

Tues **April 8 7pm** (6:30: bus. mtg) **Free**

Newburyport Library, State Street

Info: Floreen Maroncelli 978 463-9923

Merrimac Garden Club

Tues **April 1 6:30 pm Free**

Get the Most from Garden Harvest

Joan Styra, Culinary Arts teacher at Timberlane with samples and a cookbook

Merrimac Senior Center, 100 East Main St, Rte 110, Merrimac, MA

Info: Nancy Sinton 978 346-8607

Tower Hill Botanic Gardens

African Violet Show



Sat **Apr 19, 12-5**
Sun **Apr 20, 10-5pm**
Free with Admission

Displays, Tours, Workshops, Plants for sale

11 French Drive,

Boylston MA

Info: 508 869-6111

Get Ready for the Plant Sale!!

Remember last year's "Underwater Plant Sale" that was held indoors at the Town Hall? Hopefully, we will have a warm sunny day on May 17th, and we won't have to worry about the newly-varnished hardwood floors! The earth is finally starting to warm up, and as you put on your mud gloves and head for the garden, remember to set aside a few divisions for the fund-raiser. We still have lots of room for people on the sun and shade committees, and, whichever committee you want to join, we always need more plants. Chairs **Jane Jeffers** and **Joan Tranfaglia** will update us at our April 3rd meeting on where to get pots and labels, and where to drop off the

Ask Peony April, *cont. from p.4*



garden; transplants can be started 4 to 6 weeks early. Pinch the growing points of plant to encourage more prolific growth. Delicate flavor!

Dill – (Good cheer) Common garden plant. Direct seed into garden. Try cultivars Bouquet and Dukat. Great for fish and poultry.

Fennel – (Endurance) A licorice tasting herb. Fine dainty leaves, resembling asparagus. Ground seed is used in cookies and cakes. Dried leaves are a good substitute. Sometimes listed as a vegetable (finocchio) with a swollen bulbous stem.

Parsley – (Merriment) Actually a biennial, but can last three years instead of two. Improved cultivars offer larger yields of better tasting leaves. Freeze parsley.

Sage – (Wisdom) Culinary sage is closely related to salvia. It is usually treated as an annual in our climate. Sage is easy to grow and produces a large yield per area. Leaves can be harvested fresh, or can be frozen or dried for storage. The flavor of sage is strong, so a small amount is sufficient.

Cilantro - Also called coriander, this is a pungent herb often identified with Indian or Mexican dishes. It requires warmth and plenty of water in the summer growing season. The seeds and the leaves have a different flavor with the seeds being milder, more lemony.

Perennials:

Chives/Garlic chives – (Usefulness) These are very hardy perennials. Seeds can be started indoors 4 to 6 weeks early and transplanted out to the garden when the growing environment is suitable. Chive plants generally spread well. Chives are best used fresh, but can be frozen.

Thyme - (Daring) Numerous cultivars of thyme are available, and all require a good snow cover and somewhat sheltered location if they are to survive the winter. Mother-of-Thyme and Lemon thyme are the two most commonly grown cultivars. Thyme can be dried and stored for later use.

Mint - (Virtue) This is a flavoring herb with many varieties, tastes, and aromas. Varieties include apple, spearmint, and peppermint. Mint spreads profusely, so keep the plants contained by planting in a pot, level with soil.

Oregano and marjoram- (Joy) These are similar and often confused: **Marjoram** is the milder tasting of the two. Use either in stuffings or in dishes with a Mediterranean flavor. Golden and variegated forms are useful ground covers.

Lovage - A relatively unknown perennial herb, usually hardy for this climate. Plants resemble celery in appearance and taste. Frozen or dried leaves can be used year round. The flavor is strong.

Rosemary - (Remembrance) A tender perennial, rosemary must be brought inside in winter in the northeast. It loves the sun and is a very fragrant herb that perfumes its surroundings, especially when you brush past it. There are over a dozen varieties.

Lavender - (Cleanliness) Yes, for meals too! Where and how you plant is important. Lavenders are native to the Mediterranean, which means hot, rocky, and arid. They demand sharp-draining soils, never rich, damp and soggy. Mix in some sand or gravel before you plant. If you fail with lavender, it will probably be due to over-watering. Lavenders don't mind drought, and love hot sun. little water and no shade! Best bets for here, Hidecote or Munstead varieties of English lavenders.

Here are some websites for more information:

<http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/hortcult/herbs/ne208hrb.htm>

<http://www.gardenersnet.com/herbs/>

<http://www.cheftalk.com/forums/archive/index.php/f-33.html>



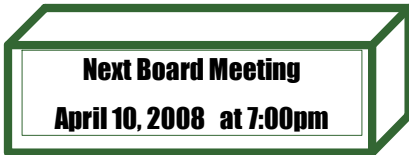
WEST NEWBURY GARDEN CLUB

77 Coffin Way
West Newbury, MA 01985

Phone: 978 363-5251
E-mail: linda-schaeffer@verizon.net
Website: www.WNGC.org

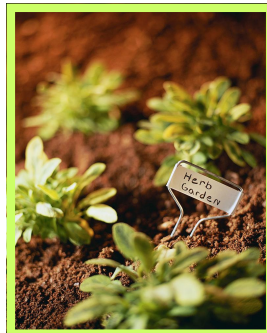
*Gardens for beauty,
learning, and sharing*

The West Newbury Garden Club was founded in 1936 to encourage and cultivate an interest in gardening, to aid in protecting and conserving our natural resources, to further the study of horticulture and flower arranging, and to promote civic beauty. For more information, please contact President Linda Schaeffer at 978 363-5251 or at linda-schaeffer@verizon.net



Ask Peony April

Dear Peony,
I love to cook with herbs and I would like to start my own herb garden. What is easy to grow in the northeast? What kind of soil? What's different?
Thank you,
Herb Cook



Dear Cookie,

Herbs are the path to international cooking. They are beautiful, fragrant and adaptable. But, like all plants, they prefer a healthy, loose or friable soil. Good drainage is an absolute must. Amend the soil with compost before the garden is planted. Herbs have coarse roots that benefit from chunky organic matter. These larger particles of soil also provide the air spaces necessary to keep the plants from drowning. Plants do need air, and they drown when they don't have it.

Plant herbs in a garden of their own, a kitchen garden, to define borders or wherever you need to fill in space. They deter insects and encourage the growth of other plants. Herbs are good people.

Herbs are annuals, biennials or perennials. The annuals may be potted and brought in for the winter. All like full sun. Some can be started from seed. Of course, if you are a lazy peony, you might consider buying in pots and planting the plants where you want them. A packet of seeds is between \$1 and \$2. A plant will cost about \$3 on up. Peony always takes the easy way out.

Herbaceously Yours,

Peony

PS: If you would like the recipe for Peony's own "Chicken Lost in the Herb Garden", call 978-363-2610, or e-mail: maguy_thomson@comcast.net

Here is a list of a few common culinary herbs:

Annuals/Biennials:

Basil- (Love) An annual, basil prefers a warm environment. Put into garden when temperatures have warmed. Over 50 different cultivars are available. Start with Sweet Basil or a purple cultivar (purple Ruffles or Dark Opal). Freeze basil; don't dry it. Love that purple ruffled!

Summer savory – (Interest) Can be direct seeded into the
Continued on page 3