

HORTICULTURAL YOUTH SOCIETY NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2010



Photo by Rad Dad

"Children are the true
connoisseurs.
What's precious to them
has no price, only value."
— Bel Kaufman

Editor: "Rad Dad" - Harry
Wyma
Box 1136 - Ridgeway ON
- N0P 2C0
E-mail:
wyma.harry@sympatico.c

a
Phone: 519-674-3493

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OHA Youth Chair: Anna Peterson, 519-284-0179, 284-0179 email: agp3@quadro.net, and/or
OHA Secretary: Janet Moyser, 519-395-0227, e-mail janetmoyser@tnt.21com - Thanks, Rad Dad.

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BEAN TUNNEL AND TEPEES

Source: horticulture.unh.edu

Ages 5 and up (two 30-45 minute sessions)

Objectives are to create a sense of ownership in the garden by the children, to entice children to play in the garden and to be creative with natural materials in the garden



Materials:

Baling twine

Fresh cut saplings or branches from the woods, about 5 cm / 1 inch round and 3 m / 10 feet long

Scissors

Shovel

Vine seeds

The tunnels or tepees are a fun and interactive type of trellis for the garden

Bean plants come in two forms, bush and pole.

When planning the tunnels or teepees, choose pole bean varieties. Their vines will grow 10 feet or more throughout the growing season. The addition of morning glories will add bright color.

Note: Never use sweet peas, as their seeds are poisonous if ingested.

Part One: Have the children collaborate and vote on the shape of the structures, e.g. teepees, tents, zigzagging tunnels? Decide where in the garden the structure(s) will be placed. Do they want to go through a maze of corn to get to it?

Part Two: Once a location is decided upon, help the children place the poles in the desired pattern. Using the twine, tie the poles together at the top. Dig holes and bury the ends of the poles. Using more twine, create webbing for the plants to climb up. This is a good time to talk about weaving!

Part Three: Plant the beans and morning glories around the base of the structure 5 cm/ 2" apart. Don't plant seeds or plants in the entryway/doorway.

If using seeds, you can have the children measure them once they've sprouted and keep track of how many days it takes to harvest.

If poles aren't available, try planting Mammoth Sunflowers to create the structure.

HEIRLOOM CARROTS

Source: helpfulgardener.com

Multicolored *heirloom carrots* have captured the imagination of diners. Now you too can grow these ancient carrots at home. Heirloom carrots come in a variety of colors, white, yellow, pink, purple and of course, orange.

Carrots have been grown for thousands of years around the world. The purple carrot is the most common in Afghanistan, the pink in India and white and yellow carrots were the most common in Europe until just a few centuries ago.

Heirloom carrots can be used in all of your carrot recipes. Roast carrots with meat, sauté, or enjoy raw in a salad. Decorate your meal with a bouquet of edible color! The foliage of early-harvest carrots can be eaten too!

While all heirloom carrots are tasty, their flavors and nutrients vary. Purple carrots contain antioxidants much like blueberries. Carrots contain Vitamin A, trace nutrients and fiber. If you are having a hard time getting your children to eat their vegetables, a purple or white carrot just might do the trick.

Growing organic carrots is very simple and is an excellent project for the beginning gardener. Because carrots are a root, and are grown underground, they are very sturdy and need little attention. You can choose to plant from seed or seed pellet, both available at your local nursery.

The most important element of a bountiful carrot crop is healthy soil. Carrots require a light soil. Add very well processed compost to your soil and dig it in deep. Add bone meal to loosen soil. Check the soil for consistency in texture. Undecomposed matter or rocks will alter the shape of your carrots. The soil should be loose and rich.

Carrots can be planted throughout the year. Check your gardening zone for local carrot planting times for your particular climate. However, if planted throughout the year, carrots can also be harvested throughout the year, and can be stored for up to three months. If you time it right, you can have carrots year-round!

Choose the right carrot variety before you plant. There are two main varieties of carrots: *early harvest* and *main crop*. Early harvest carrots can be harvested before reaching full maturity. They are tastier and sweeter and more expensive in the market. These carrots are usually harvested early. Early harvest carrots prefer full sun while main crop carrots need light shade in the summer.

When planting your carrot seeds dig a long trench, about 2 1/2 cm / 1" deep. Plant the seeds about 2 1/2 cm / 1" apart. Even though the seeds are tiny, avoid planting too many as you will have more thinning work to do later.

A common enemy of the carrot is the *Carrot Rust Fly*. This fly lays its eggs in carrot plants and the larvae eat through the carrots themselves, causing them to rot. The carrot fly also attacks similar plants like parsnips and beets. You may be able to tell that your plants are under attack if the foliage reddens or wilts. There are not always obvious signs that Carrot Flies have infested.

There are several ways to prevent the Carrot Fly from ruining your plot. If you avoid planting your carrots during the period when the fly lays its eggs, you may have nothing to worry about. Do not plant carrots from mid April through early June or mid July through early September.

Carrot flies are attracted to the smell of carrots. When harvesting or thinning your carrots, do so on a still evening. The flies are dormant in the evening and the lack of wind will prevent the smell of carrots from spreading. A thin net spread over your carrot rows will prevent the female flies from laying eggs in your carrots and a high wind area is unappealing to the flies as they are not strong fliers.

Carrots and Winter

To prevent fungus from infecting your carrot crops, be sure to remove old carrots every year. Pull all carrots by late October; carrots left in the ground through the winter are likely to attract disease, which will remain in the soil through next season. If your soil is infected, try solarizing it.

This is a process in which a plastic sheet is placed over bare soil for several weeks effectively burning off diseases and pests.

Be selective as to what type of plastic you use and PVC plastics should be avoided as plasticizers are added which leak into the soil.

If your crops appear to be affected by rust, remove affected foliage (those leaves spotted with orange). You may have to remove some plants in order to increase air circulation. Also, avoid adding nitrogen to your garden in any form, as these encourage rust growth.

Carrots are a staple around the world. Cuddled by the soil, they are cared for by the earth and encouraged by their organic gardener. Heirloom carrots provide a fun variation on old traditions and organic heirloom carrots are much tastier, easier and healthier for you and everybody.

ORGANIC COMPOST: THE EASY WAY!

Source: helpfulgardener.com

Compost is a combination of organic matter and/or manure, which has decomposed until it resembles a rich soil. Compost is not gross, rotten, smelly or dirty. Compost is a beautiful, nutritious food for your plants and the key to a healthy organic garden.

In addition to being a great provider of nutrients, well-done compost is able to hold water in the soil, thereby ensuring that plants are adequately watered. It is also one of the best soil amendments to assist in efficient drainage, which helps prevent rot and nutrient depletion typical of poorer soils. Furthermore, many of the components of compost actually bind to toxic chemicals, so that they do not enter into the plant through its roots.

Compost can be purchased at the store or nursery or made easily at home. Compost is made from things that would otherwise be thrown away. While making compost may seem daunting, just remember that compost makes itself! Compost is always being created; it always has and always will. There is a passive and active way to make compost and many stages in between.

Adding compost to your garden or lawn can provide it with all of the Nitrogen, Potassium and Sulfur, and almost all of the Phosphorus that it needs. Along with these very important three ingredients, compost is filled with hundreds of other essential vitamins, nutrients, micronutrients and minerals including iron, zinc, iodine, cobalt, boron, copper, manganese and molybdenum. These ingredients are essential for the growth and survival of the organic plants you are growing.

Adding compost can solve nearly all soil structure problems you may have. Compost aids drainage, stores water well, allows for airflow and encourages earthworms and other helpful organisms and microorganisms. While compost may be just about the perfect consistency for successful growth, it still must be mixed with soil within your garden.

To gain all of the benefits of compost, only a small amount is needed. Spread compost over your entire garden in a layer that is two to three inches thick. Do this only once, at the beginning of the planting season. Be sure to cover your beds with mulch in the winter to retain nutrients.

Just as all of our daily-required nutrients can be found in the right combination and variety of foods; so can plant nutrients be found in the same place! Compost made up of our kitchen scraps and yard waste is filled with vitamins and minerals, just the kind that a healthy garden

needs to grow and thrive. Just think of compost as a great big salad for your garden.

Decaying matter is the raw material of new life. In an untouched forest, fallen leaves and debris provide the nutrients needed for the growth of the living trees in a perfect cycle of life. Bacteria and other living things in the soil break down the dead matter and convert it into food for the new plants.

There are two ways to go about composting, an active way and a passive way. Merely throwing your kitchen scraps into a pile in your yard and covering them with hay is a compost pile, though you may not see results for almost a year. An active compost pile requires a little bit more work.

An active compost pile means building a simple container; usually a three-sided wooden box. Be sure to balance the nitrogen and carbon-containing materials that you add to your compost pile; you can find helpful charts for this in most organic gardening manuals. Keep your compost pile moist and turn often. The hotter your compost pile gets, the more likely it is to kill off diseases and unwanted weed seeds.

A successful compost heap contains a proper ratio of carbon-rich and nitrogen-rich materials. Some of the best materials to put into a compost include composted dairy manure, composted chicken manure, worm castings, bat guano, kelp meal and ground oyster shells. Also, kitchen scraps are generally nitrogen-rich and hay, straw, bark and black and white newspaper articles are examples of carbon-rich materials needed to balance the nitrogen levels.

These are often referred to as the "green" and "brown" ingredients in a healthy compost heap.

It's important to remember, though, that a long list of popular plant food products actually derive their nitrogen content from petroleum. Not only is that gross, but it's far from organic.

While almost any waste can ultimately be composted, some things should not go into your garden compost. It may seem obvious to many gardeners, but we it's worth mentioning that cat, dog and human feces are big no-nos in composting. That's because they may contain unfavorable bacteria, which you do not want spread into your garden.

In addition, bones and meat are unfavorable as they will attract raccoons and rats, dairy and high-oil content wastes will take a very long time to compost and metal, rubber, glass and plastic may take decades to biodegrade! It is also important that you avoid adding pest or disease-

ridden material to your compost as this will spread to the healthy plants in your garden.

Animal manure (provided it's not from cats or dogs) can be added to your compost as a means for activating the decaying process. Fresh, rather than rotted manure is best for this as it still contains the necessary living bacteria. Also, manure can raise the temperature of the compost pile, thus helping to activate the existing bacteria and further speeding the decomposition process.

You will know your compost is ready to use when it is soil-like, odor free, moist (but not wet) and dark. Now it is time to add it to your garden. Only a little is needed, but it will make a world of difference. Compost not only adds nutrients to your garden, but aids with drainage, nutrient and water retention and disease prevention!

With just a little work you will have an endless supply of compost and fully renewing, mineral rich soil year after year for a successful and healthy organic garden!

THE RAIN FOREST

There are lots of plants

It is always hot and humid

Tall trees

Small bugs

Lush green leaves

Monkeys chatter while swinging through trees

There are many different kind of birds

— Rory Bridgewater, Grade 5, Walsh P.S. Norfolk

A LITTLE FLOWER

A little flower

Still in the garden,

Next to the river,

Under the bridge.

It fell in the water

And never was still again.

— Caprice Gray, Age 4, New York, New York

MAKE A POTATO PAINTING

Source: kiddiegardens.com

You will need: a nice firm potato, a sharp knife (or craft knife), a pencil, some poster or tempera paint in a tinfoil dish, paper or card to print on, and some colored crayons.



- Then draw a simple shape on it. Hearts, Xs, and circles work well.
- Use the knife to cut away the potato around the drawing, so that you are left with a 1 cm / 1/3" raised design.
- Blot the potato with paper towel again, then dip the raised design into your paint and stamp it onto the paper.
- Repeat the process until you have the desired design.

The stamps can be arranged to form a pattern or a flower or house. You can add additional detail with colored crayons, eg two stamped circles could become two balloons, just by drawing in the strings.

- Leave the painting to dry.

Tip: you can also use cookie cutters - simply press into the potato after cutting in half, and remove the excess around the cutter.

CHILDREN

"There never was child so lovely but his mother was glad to get him asleep" Emerson

VALUES

"There is never a wrong time to do the right thing." Author Unknown

"I'd rather have roses on my table than diamonds on my neck." Emma Goldman

"It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are." Roy Disney

Jokes: How is rain saved up? In a cloud bank

What do you call a sheep with no legs? A Cloud

GROW A CRESS EGPPERSON

Source: kiddiegardens.com

You will need: an egg, some cotton wool or kitchen towel, felt tip pens and cress seeds.

1. Boil the egg and eat for breakfast! Take care to slice off only the very top of the eggshell - fairly evenly if possible.
2. Carefully place a wad of cotton wool or shredded kitchen towel in the base of the eggshell (now empty!). It should fill about half of the space available.
3. Place the eggshell in an eggcup and using felt tip pens, draw a face on one side of the egg - excluding any hair.
4. Saturate the cotton wool or kitchen towel with water.
5. Sprinkle some seeds on to the cotton wool.
6. Keep the cotton wool moist by watering every day, and within a matter of a couple of days, the cress will germinate and start to grow.

To grow cress is a fairly quick experience, it will literally start showing above the egghead within only about 10 days, and hey presto! You have managed to provide your Egg person (or monsters!) with a nice, edible mop of hair.

Tips: Use tepid to warm water to saturate the wool or kitchen towel, as this encourages quicker germination.

If your egg is large enough, try standing it in an empty and painted toilet roll, to provide your egg person with a body too!

As an alternative to cress, mustard can be used. It grows longer, so is ideal for larger eggs or really hippy egg persons!

BLIND

I am blind,
I can see things in a special way,
I can see things others can't,
like blackness
- Kelly McQuiggan Courtland P.S. Norfolk, Gr 5

CANADA

Canada
Territories, Provinces
Waving lakes, Oceans Free, Fun,
Exciting, Cool
Nation
- Christy Friesen, Walsh P.S. Norfolk, Grade 5

"**The telephone** (cell) has now become a modern day human appendage." — Rad Dad

GOURD BIRDHOUSE

Gourds prove that nature has a sense of humor: their wild markings, eye-popping colors, and space-alien shapes transform the late-summer garden into a natural amusement park. If you've considered growing gourds but wondered what in the world to do with them, this project will answer your question--and please the birds in the process.



Materials

- Garden area to grow gourd
- Gourd seeds
- Wire
- Drill and assorted bits
- Satin polyurethane and a disposable foam paintbrush

Instructions

1. Growing the Gourd

Allow each plant 10 to 15 square feet of garden space; you can get away with a little less if you trellis your plants. For each plant you plan to grow (one will suffice for this project), plant a half dozen seeds, following the directions on the seed packet. Before planting, mix a little fertilizer into the soil, then reapply it monthly during the growing season. Keep seeds and plants well watered

2. Drying the Gourd

Harvest your gourd before the first frost, taking care to cut rather than twist the stem. Ideally the fruit will have attained a diameter of 6 or more inches. Wash the gourd carefully to remove any dirt or debris. As an extra safeguard against rot, some experts recommend dipping gourds in a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.

Drill a small hole through the gourd's neck, insert a hanging wire, and suspend the fruit in a dry, well-ventilated space until the seeds rattle around inside the shell (about four weeks but

sometimes longer). Once the gourd is dry, any surface mold or fungus can be removed with steel wool, or left on for a more rustic look.

3. Making the Birdhouse

Drill a 2-inch-diameter hole in the side of the gourd for the bird's front door. Remove the dried seeds and fibers. Drill two 1 cm / 1/4" holes about 3 cm / 1 1/2" up from the bottom of the gourd for ventilation and drainage.

For a more colorful look, paint the gourd in the motif of your choice, and then finish with two coats of satin polyurethane. Hang the birdhouse in a sheltered area at least 6 feet from the ground

Tips:

One gardening note: large gourds such as the birdhouse or bottle variety can take up to 130 days to mature. In areas with shorter growing seasons, ask at your garden center about black plastic mulch, row covers and other season-extending devices and techniques.

HOW TO MAKE DANDELION SYRUP

Source: allfreecrafts.com
by Jane Lake

I first made dandelion syrup when my kids were preschoolers and we woke one morning to find the lawn full of dandelions. I never used weed killer on my lawn, and the dandelions were there for the picking, so...we gathered up buckets of dandelion heads and made new syrup for pancakes and waffles. The kids were enchanted, and it's still one of their favourite memories.

Here are two recipes for dandelion syrup, plus an uplifting essay from Donna Doyon on the subject of the lowly dandelion weed.



Dandelion Syrup

Put 250 dandelion flower heads* in a large kettle. Squeeze the juice of one lemon into the kettle, and add 4 cups of water. Bring to a boil, cover kettle, and simmer for one hour. Remove from heat and leave the kettle covered overnight. Strain the dandelion mixture and add 1 kg / 2 lbs of white sugar to the remaining liquid. Boil for one and a half hours to a syrup consistency. Wipe

any spills from the stove immediately (or you'll need a chisel to remove it!) Store in a tightly sealed jar in the refrigerator.

Dandelion Syrup Deux

1000 mL / 4 cups dandelion tops*
juice of 1/2 lemon
1L / 1 quart water
1000 gram / 2 pounds sugar
Place tops in water and bring to a boil. Let boil for one minute, cover, and let stand overnight. Next day, strain and extract excess water. Discard flower tops. Mix with lemon juice and sugar and simmer until most of the water evaporates. Do not bring to a hard boil. Let mixture cool, and then simmer once more until the thickness of maple syrup. Good for pancakes and flapjacks.

Note: * **be sure to use only** dandelions that have not been exposed to pesticides, lead, herbicides or other chemicals. This includes dandelions growing on the side of roads. Unless you are sure that the flowers are chemical free, don't use them!



DANDELION FACE WASH

Use 250 mL / 1 cup dandelion to 1 pint boiled water for an hour. Wash face with water, and lay down with blossoms on eyes for 15 minutes. No need to rinse.

LESSONS FROM A DANDELION

By Donna Doyon

I recall as a young child bringing bouquets of brilliant yellow flowers to my mother. It didn't matter that the stems felt sticky or that both my parents cursed the presence of these flowers in the lawn. I thought they were beautiful!

And there were so many of them! We spent hours picking the flowers and then popping the blossoms off with a snap of our fingers. But the supply of dandelions never ran out. My father or brothers would chop off all the heads with the lawn mower at least once a week, but that didn't stop these hardy wonders.

As I worked in my garden last week, pulling unwanted weeds out of the space that would become a haven for tomatoes, corn, peas and sunflowers, I again marveled at the flower that

some call a weed. And I thought, "If only I had the staying power of a dandelion."

If only I could stretch my roots so deep and straight that something tugging on my stem couldn't separate me completely from the source that feeds me life. If only I could come back to face the world with a bright, sunshiny face after someone has run me over with a lawnmower or worse, purposely attacked me in an attempt to destroy me. If only my foliage was a nutritious source of vitamins that help others grow. If only I could spread love and encouragement as freely and fully as this flower spreads seeds of it's self.

The lawns at my parents' home are now beautiful green blankets. The only patches of color come from well-placed, well-controlled flowerbeds. Chemicals have managed to kill what human persistence couldn't.

I hope you and I can be different. I hope that we can stretch our roots deep enough that the strongest poison can't reach our souls. I hope that we can overcome the poisons of anger, fear, hate, criticism and competitiveness. I hope that we can see flowers in a world that sees weeds.

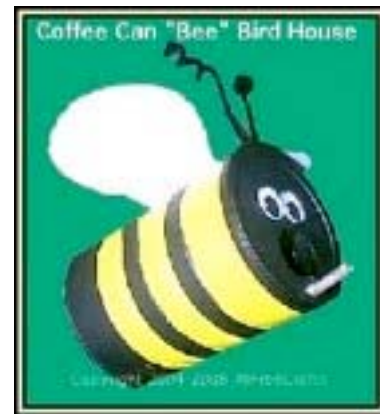
COFFEE CAN BIRDHOUSE

Source: allfreecrafts.com

By Twila Lenoir

Recycle, recycle recycle. My favorite crafting!

In this free nature craft, recycle a coffee can to make a whimsical "bee" birdhouse as a focal point for your garden.



Supplies:

- Coffee can with lid
- Acrylic craft paint or model car paint
- Black pipe cleaner
- White fun foam
- Large google eyes
- Drill or a fat nail and hammer

- Fishing line or strong string
- Outdoor sealer
- Piece of a dowel or a strong twig

Craft Project Instructions:

1. Cut a hole near the middle of the coffee can lid, large enough for the type of birds that you would like to attract to the birdhouse. Just below this hole, punch a small round hole with a paper punch.
2. Paint the front of the lid black.
3. Remove the paper wrapper from the can. If a glue line remains, where the wrapper was seamed together, use this area as the belly, or bottom part, of the bee.
4. Painting the can should be easy as it has ready-made lines. Start with the bottom of the can and first ripple line from the bottom, and paint it black then paint every other line black. The remaining line lanes paint yellow when the black is dry.

Painting tips: a reader wrote in to say that if you mix a little bit of glue with the craft paint it will improve the adhesion to the can. You can also scuff up the can with sandpaper to improve the paint adhesion. If using craft paint, you will likely need two coats of black paint and three coats of yellow. An alternative to craft paint is gloss model car paints which will stick to the metal can very well and provide a nice shiny finish.

5. When the paint is dry, place the black lid back onto the can, making sure that the lid is lined up so the mouth opening lines up with the belly of the can (where the coffee can label glue was left over). Spray or brush on an outdoor sealer.
6. Glue on the large google eyes toward the top of the lid over the birdhouse opening. Glue a small dowel or twig into the paper-punched hole.
7. Take a pipe cleaner and fold it in half. Wrap each end of the pipe cleaner around a pencil to form curly ends on the antenna. Glue the pipe cleaner onto the can, positioning it over the eyes on the lid.
8. For the wings, take a white square of fun foam, fold it in half and cut a tear drop shape cut in a square at the fold. Open up and glue to the top of the can right behind the antennas.
9. Using a drill, or a fat nail and hammer, make two holes close together on the top of the wings and can. Pull fishing line or strong string through the holes and knot off. Hang from a tree in your yard. Everyone will envy this birdhouse!

Enjoy!

MAKE YOUR OWN CLOUD IN A JAR

Source: The London Free Press - August 2009

You will need:

a large jar – a plastic bag of ice that will fit over the top of the jar – a pitcher of warm water – a sheet of black construction paper – a flashlight – and matches

How to Make: Tape the black construction paper onto one side of the jar.

Pour the warm water into the jar until it is about one-third full. Get an adult to light a match and hold it for a few seconds.

Extinguish the match, then, quickly cover the jar with the bag of ice.

Shine the flashlight on the jar, and observe the cloud you have made.

TEN GOOD REASONS TO GARDEN TOGETHER

by *Composting Council of Canada* August 31, '09

There are many good reasons to foster a lifelong love of gardening in children. Here are 10:

1. Health: Growing your own vegetables makes it easier to get enough servings each day.
2. Exercise: Digging, turning, spreading compost, mulching, hoeing, picking rocks all burn calories, & build muscles and strengthen heart and lungs.
3. Save \$\$\$: Even a small vegetable patch can save you money.
4. Education: Gardening is terrific for hands-on lessons in botany, zoology, weather, hydrology, and cycles of life, death and physical decay.
5. Waste reduction and recycling: Compost piles transform kitchen scraps, leaves and yard waste into rich soil amendments. You can reuse all kinds of cans, cartoons, meat trays and more.
6. Stress Relief: Planting seeds and tending plants can restore balance and perspective.
7. Togetherness: Use vegetables grown together to make delicious meals together. And together donate abundance to people who need it.
8. Help improve reading and math skills. Kids can make plant markers, read seed packets and even help pay for nursery plants.
9. Provide great memories for the years to come.
10. Satisfaction: The more time you spend with your children in the garden, the more they will feel the garden is truly theirs and the more eager they will be to take care of it.

A Few Tips for Gardening with Kids

1 Lay the paths that are up to 1 metre / 2-3 ft wide in the garden for easier maintenance. This can be as simple as putting down newspaper and covering it with straw or wood chips.

2 Fragrant plants transform the imagination. If you grow tomatoes, herbs or scented flowers like roses, peonies or lilacs: their scents will always remind your children of happy garden times.

3 Locate the garden where the whole family can see it from the kitchen or family room window.

Design Ideas: 1. Start small.

2. One easy design is to divide 30 cm (1 foot) squares with paths, adding as many as you like. Use stones, bark, and mulch, boards to form the paths. Plant something different in each square.

3. A pizza or circular garden is also fun. Slice it, pie fashion, with paths between the slices.

4. When planting, make sure tall plants are not likely to shade smaller ones.

5. Give big plants like pumpkins lots of room.

Put Safety First

1 Always supervise young children in the garden to make sure they are safe.

2 Keep children protected from sun and heat exposure. In hot weather apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen to children at least 20 minutes before they go out into the sun and reapply regularly.

3 Make sure everyone wears a wide-brimmed hat when working in the garden in sunny weather.

4 Serve them water often. Having children sip a beverage regularly will help prevent dehydration.

5 Keep fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals locked up, out of sight and reach of children. Better still; don't use them in the garden at all.

6 Make sure all yard tools and power equipment are safely stored in a locked area to be used with young children only under adult supervision.

7 To minimize the risk of bee and insect stings have children wear shoes and light-coloured clothing. Check manufacturer's instructions on insect repellent, and use it sparingly on children and never on infants.

8 If a child experiences a reaction to an insect bite, seek medical attention immediately.

GRAPE VINE OBELISK

Source: craftygardener.ca

This obelisk makes an interesting and practical feature for your garden.

Set this into your garden among the flowers or let some morning glory vines grow up it.

This year I set up the grape vine obelisk in a large container and planted morning glory seeds. The vines have reached the top and I'm now in the process of twisting and training them to go down a bit before they go up again. The blooms are just beginning to open.



Answers to: Birds in the Mix page 15

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. House Finch | 2. Bald Eagle |
| 3. Great Egret | 4. Hummingbird |
| 5. Blue Jay | 6. American Robin |
| 7. Pileated Woodpecker | 8. Cedar Waxwing |
| 9. Pine Grosbeak | 10. Northern Mockingbird |
| 11. Northern Cardinal | 12. Goldfinch |

FAILURE OF SEEDS TO SPROUT:

- Temperature may be too low or too high
- Soil may have dried out
- Seeds planted too deeply
- Top watering that floated seeds away
- Seeds that were too old and/or poorly stored
- Not enough contact between seeds and soil
- Toxic substance in the soil
- Damping-off disease
- Lack of light for some seeds that require light or lack of darkness for those needing dark

RETIRED TOOLS Source: craftygardener.ca

I just hate to part with old garden tools. For a long time they just took up space in the garage. But now they hang on the trellis and make interesting garden art.

The latest addition to the retired tools is an old garden nozzle. I took apart the old nozzle and poked beading wire through the holes. Beads were threaded onto the wires to resemble the water.

Now the nozzle happily does what it does best ... sprays a virtual cool mist onto my vines.

I also fastened an old piece of hosepipe to make it look like it is connected to the tap.



Even the old handles from shovels and garden forks are put to good use.

One old handle made a great flagpole at the edge of the compost garden.

GARDENING WORD SEARCH

Q	A	O	E	J	N	E	N	X	S
L	N	A	Z	I	E	L	S	E	M
A	O	C	R	O	S	I	O	O	B
P	I	F	P	L	N	I	M	L	T
E	T	I	E	O	T	U	N	S	A
S	A	N	T	A	M	G	I	T	S
N	N	E	A	D	I	D	U	T	N
T	I	M	L	G	R	O	O	T	N
N	L	A	M	A	L	T	A	I	L
G	L	T	R	E	H	T	N	A	C
A	O	S	N	N	F	Y	J	T	I
N	P	J	M	G	N	I	N	A	W

WORD LIST:

POLLINATED	STIGMA	ANTHER
STAMEN	PETAL	SEPAL
ROOT	WANING	

GROWING POTATOES IN CONTAINERS

Source: kiddiegardens.com

Growing potatoes is simple enough, but often requires a fair bit of garden space, not to mention digging. Growing potatoes in containers enables you to achieve a superb crop of potatoes within a fraction of the space usually required. And kids just love growing potatoes - well, at least they love digging them up, and using a potato planter makes the job even easier!

The traditional method for growing potatoes is to plant the seed potatoes in a long row, then mound the earth up around them as the plants grow (usually when they reach about 15 cm – 20 cm / 7" – 9" in height), to avoid the tubers from being exposed to the sun. Once the potatoes are ready to harvest, they are dug up.

Potatoes are not fussy about the ground they are grown in, and are often used to help prepare a plot for future vegetable growing. It is not advisable to try growing potatoes in soil that is

waterlogged or contains too much clay, so try to work some organic matter into the soil before planting.

If looking to buy a potato planter or a potato barrel, ensure it is good quality (sturdy) and suitable for the space you have. It is best to store them inside during the winter to prolong their life expectancy.

ALTERNATIVE POTATO PLANTERS

Alternatives to buying commercial potato planters are growing potatoes in grow bags, in larger plant pots or plastic containers, and in wooden boxes. Growing potatoes in tires is also a very popular method.

The main benefits of growing potatoes in these alternative containers is obviously cost - we may already have large planters or pots hanging around, or be handy enough to construct a wooden box out of scraps of wood, and grow bags are far from expensive.

Types of Potatoes

Potatoes are usually divided into main crop or early potatoes. The early varieties need "chitting" before being planted; the main crop potatoes benefit from chitting but don't insist on it.

The First Early potatoes are planted earlier (usually late March) and can be harvested as new potatoes when they are the size of an egg towards the end of June. Second Early potatoes are planted a couple of weeks later and are ready to be lifted in July or August.

Main crop potatoes are planted in mid to late April or very early May, and the first ones are ready to be lifted in August to be eaten straight away, while most will be lifted in September or October for storage over the winter.

Within the early and main crop there are also different types of potatoes. Potatoes can have red, yellow or white skin, and the flesh can vary between a pale cream and yellow. Some potato varieties are particularly good for certain types of cooking, e.g., the main crop variety '*Majestic*' has been the most popular potato for making chips in the UK, while '*Kerr's Pink*' is a good potato for mashing.

One of the benefits of growing potatoes in tires is that you can grow different types of potatoes easily. Simply have several stacks of tires: one for early potatoes, one for a red skinned main crop and one for a potato variety perfect for making chips!

Remember: Green potatoes are poisonous!
As are the all other potato plant parts.



Before planting potatoes, it is usual to chit them. Chitting means that when you receive your seed potatoes in around February, you place them in a light, dry environment, but out of direct sunlight (a north facing window sill is a good place) and wait for small shoots to grow from the eye of the potato, which should be facing up. When looking at a potato, you will notice that one end will usually have more eyes than the other end; this is called the rose end (see image to the left). Early potatoes need to be chitted before being planted, while main crop varieties don't absolutely need it but will benefit from being chitted before being planted.

GROWING POTATOES IN A TIRE

First choose a sunny spot. Ensure there is drainage below the tire, as potatoes don't like getting waterlogged, though they do need sufficient water for the tubers to form.

Main crop potatoes are usually planted in April or very early May. The main aspect affecting planting time is frost. Potatoes are only half-hardy and frost will damage emerging plants.

Fill the tire with damp earth to just over half the depth and place 4 - 5 seed potatoes in it; the eyes or shoots facing up; cover with 5 cm / 2" of soil.

In this example, we have used seed potatoes for a main crop, which have not been chitted.



Keep the soil moist but not wet and within about 6 weeks there should be several healthy potato plants growing. If your seed potatoes were chitted, the plants should appear sooner.

If there is any chance of a late frost, protect the young plants with straw or earth them up immediately they appear.

When the young potato plants are 5 cm – 7 cm / 2" – 3" high, add a second tire to the stack and add more soil, almost covering them.

Continue covering the emerging plants with soil until the tires are 3 high. Tubers will be forming all the way up the stack of tires.

Early potatoes are ready to harvest when the flowers have opened or the buds fallen off; dig a few tubers up and check - they should be about the size of a hen's egg. With main crop potatoes, wait until the foliage has turned brown, cut off at the stems and wait a few days before lifting.

Although when growing potatoes in tires it is possible to have a stack four tires high, we would not recommend this when growing potatoes with children. The temptation to climb up the stack is rather too great and they could hurt themselves if the earth-filled tires fell on top of them.

Keep the potatoes well watered during long dry spells or droughts. The tubers being formed are largely water, so lack of water can result in potatoes, which look okay, but are rubbery and soft on the inside.

Always grow potatoes from seed potatoes, which have been certified as virus-free.

Remember that potatoes like:

- Being chitted before being planted out.
- A nice sunny spot away from frost pockets.
- Being earthed up to prevent the tubers being exposed to the sun.
- Beans, cabbage, marigolds and nasturtiums.

Remember that potatoes dislike:

- Frost! If there is any chance of frost after the potatoes have started growing, cover them with a blanket of earth or straw.
- Long dry spells - the tubers need water to grow properly, so water well during droughts.
- Being grown in the same place as the previous year or two. Potatoes are very much in favour of crop rotation!
- Cucumbers, pumpkins, squash or tomatoes.

Potatoes grow well with beans, especially bush beans, cabbage, marigolds and nasturtiums. They also get on okay with corn and eggplants.

Growing Potatoes with Companion Plants

Don't try growing potatoes in tires together with other plants or near cucumbers, pumpkins, squash, courgettes (zucchini) or tomatoes. One of the reasons for this is that all these vegetables are prone to mosaic virus, and keeping them apart helps to prevent the virus from spreading from one vegetable type to the next. Tomatoes can also catch potato blight, so again, keep them apart to try to prevent cross infection.

FACTS ON GROWING CARROTS

Source: kiddiegardens.com

Carrots varieties include short, medium and long-rooted types.

The *short-rooted* carrots can be suitable for growing in containers or deep window boxes and even include small round ball-like types. They are the earliest to be sown and the quickest to mature. Small, quick and tasty! Good varieties to go for are the Parmex (a round type) or the Ideal Speedy Seeds (a type of Nantes which is used as a baby vegetable and ideal for growing in containers on patios).

The *medium-rooted* types are sown slightly later than the short-rooted carrots and are usually the best bet for harvesting a successful crop.

The *long-rooted* varieties take the longest to mature and are the fussiest about the quality of the ground. Fine for showing off, but not the sweetest taste

Carrots Like:

- Cool, wet weather, and can be sown before the last frost has passed
- Lots of sunshine - choose a sunny spot but keep them well watered
- Fertile, sandy and well-draining soil, without loads of stones in it,
- Onions, chives, radishes, sage and rosemary.

Carrots Dislike:

- Long, hot, dry spells which bakes the ground hard
- Soil which is heavy, consists largely of clay or is full of stones
- Ground that has been prepared with manure or compost
- Too much nitrogen - it spoils their taste

Growing Carrots With Companion Plants

The main enemy of the carrot is the carrot fly, which is attracted to the wonderful smell given off by the foliage. Onion, leeks and black salsify help to repel carrot fly, as do the herbs rosemary, wormwood and sage.

Carrots also grow well with tomatoes, chives, lettuce and radishes - the latter is often sown together in a row with carrots, as it germinates and grows quicker and therefore indicates where the carrots are growing!

How To Grow Carrots

Carrots can be sown outside in situ from around the middle of March until the end of June or July. They germinate in 2 to 3 weeks, and take between 2 to 4 months to mature fully, depending on the variety. Choose a sunny spot. Check seed packet for more detailed information on that varieties preferred sowing time.



Before sowing the carrots, ensure the ground has been well dug over and is free of weeds and stones. If the ground is a bit hard or clayey, dig in some sand or peat to lighten the soil up, but not fresh compost or manure. In fact, carrots should not be grown on a patch, which has been modified with manure during the previous year.

Prepare the ground as described above, then, a couple of weeks before sowing, rake some general fertilizer into the ground. Go over the plot with a rake until you have a fine tilth of small grains not large clumps!

Use your row markers and some twine to mark out the line along which you are growing carrots, draw away about 2 cm / 1/2" of soil along the line with a garden rake or hoe, and water generously

Carrot seeds are tiny, and it is easy to sow too many and be left with a large number to thin out later on. One way of avoiding this is to mix the

seed with sand before sowing. Carefully sprinkle the seeds along the line, trying to drop one seed approximately every 3 cm – 5 cm / 1 ½" to 2".

Once the seedlings are large enough to handle they can be thinned out. But don't thin them out too much, as the denser the foliage above them, the less likely weeds are to grow underneath and the less weeding you need to do! Also try to avoid damaging the foliage when thinning out, as the smell attracts carrot fly

Very gently cover the seeds with a tiny bit of soil. The seeds barely need 1 cm – 2 cm / ½" of soil above them to germinate; the most frequent reason for a crop to fail to emerge is that the seeds were planted too deeply.

Water generously.

Tips: if growing carrots in at least two adjacent rows, leave a gap of about 15 cm / 6" between the rows.

Keep the carrots well watered during long, dry spells. Carrot seedlings are quite weak, so keeping the ground damp while they germinate and start to pop their heads through the ground is a must. Radishes planted with them will also help by loosening the ground.

Try to grow some of the companion plants mentioned above next to or at least near the carrots to help avoid them being destroyed by the carrot fly.

When the time comes to dig the carrots up, use a garden fork to loosen the ground around the carrots before pulling.

THE WORLD OF ANTS – A WORD FIND PUZZLE

Source: Western People – October 1998 by Janice M. Peterson

S	E	I	C	E	P	S	E	I	N	O	L	O	C	C
I	O	F	A	S	C	I	N	A	T	I	N	G	T	O
G	N	C	N	L	E	T	A	M	I	L	C	P	L	M
B	N	E	I	C	L	A	S	S	E	S	X	U	U	M
S	R	I	E	A	D	I	Y	M	R	A	E	P	D	O
S	W	O	G	U	L	U	H	R	S	B	L	A	A	N
R	O	A	W	G	Q	T	U	A	E	I	P	R	T	O
E	R	I	J	N	I	O	B	A	P	T	M	T	U	E
I	K	D	E	R	I	D	V	F	U	E	O	S	N	Z
D	E	C	S	V	O	R	C	W	E	E	C	E	N	I
L	R	I	A	M	A	N	S	A	O	M	G	N	E	N
O	S	H	E	L	M	A	L	E	S	L	A	G	L	A
S	E	N	E	C	B	Y	S	U	B	T	L	L	S	G
B	A	N	T	E	N	N	A	E	T	S	E	E	E	R
G	N	I	Y	R	R	A	C	S	T	I	N	G	Y	O

ABDOMEN	ADULT	ANTENNAE	ARMY
BEHAVIOUR	BITE	BLACK	BROWN
BUSY	CARRYING	CASTE	CLASSES
CLIMATE	COLONIES	COMMON	COMPLEX
DIGGING	EGGS	FASCINATING	FEMALE
HILLS	JAWS	LARVAE	MALES
NEST	ORGANIZED	PUPA	QUEEN
RED	SOCIAL	SOLDIERS	SPECIES
STING	TUNNELS	WORKERS	YELLOW

SOLUTION = 2 WORDS - 18 LETTERS (INDUSTRIOUS INSECTS)

HOW TO GROW A GIANT PUMPKIN

1. Select an area protected from wind, and early frosts, approximately 10 x 10 metres (or yards) for each plant.
2. apply generous amounts of well-rotted manure.
3. Work only when fit, not when too wet.
4. Plant 3 seeds in a hill in the middle of the allotted area and surround the hill with black plastic (garbage bag) to help heat the soil. Leave a hole for the seedlings to emerge.

5. After emergence, carefully cut the less desirable seedlings for each hill, leaving the best plant.

6. As the vines grow, spread them to cover the entire area.

7. Every two weeks, side-dress with small amounts of a 1-1-1 ratio fertilizer, spread around the entire hill.

BIRDS IN THE MIX – A WORD SCRAMBLE

Try your luck at this word scramble of some common bird names. Answers pg 10

1. SEOHU NCHIF
2. LDAB LEEGA
3. TARGE GTERE
4. MBIDMUIGHNR
5. EBUL YJA
6. CARANMI BRINO
7. LTED APEL ODKCEORWP
8. DARCE WGNIXWA
9. EIPN BGSOAEKR
10. RNERPOTHN
KBRDIMOCING
11. TNROHREN DRACNILA
12. FNHCIGLOD

WHY Leggy Plants?

Plants with long stems and long internodes may be due to some of the following reasons:

- . Poor drainage
- . Low fertility
- . Concentration of excess fertilizer salts
- . Temperature too low
- . Insufficient air space in soil media
- . Low light conditions

8. As the vines grow, encourage additional rooting by pushing soil against the side of the nodes on the vines. Do not cover the vines
9. As the first blossoms develop, ensure that they are fertilized, by taking a stamen from one flower and gently rubbing the pistil of another.
10. As the fruits develop on the vines, choose a large healthy fruit (about the size of a grapefruit) near the centre of the plant. Remove all other fruits and subsequent blooms.
11. Protect from early frosts in as a lot of growing can occur during the fall.
- 12 Keep it well watered.
13. Such liquids as beer and milk do not help, as the nutrients are not in a form that is accessible to the plant.

DID YOU KNOW?

The cycles of the moon have an effect upon the seeds growth. Farmers have been using the moon to help them grow crops successfully for centuries! When the moon grows or "waxing", it is a great time to plant ground crops. When the moon is full, it isn't recommended to plant. When the moon is decreasing or "waning", root crops can be planted.

CRITTER TAG - THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

Source: The Banner June 1997

by Joanne De Jonge

Let's play critter tag. What? You've never played? You'll catch on. Just follow me over to the woodlot.

For tag, we need a home base. Let's make it this trillium plant. It's at least six years old. A trillium plant can't flower until it turns six.

The first thing to touch home base will be It. Here he comes — that ant crawling up the stem, looking for seeds. Ants drag trillium seeds to their nests, eat the sweet parts, and throw the rest away. The leftover parts sprout into trillium.

The ant's It! Lets follow him. See? He's checking that violet for seeds. Sp is that chipmunk. Oops! They touched! Now the chipmunk's It. Follow her. She dodged under that beech tree. Critters love beeches because beech trees often have good nesting and hiding holes in their trunks.

The chipmunk walks past a porcupine hole. You can tell it's a porcupine hole by all the droppings outside. Porkies are messy that way. Now the porky's It.

Up a white birch tree she goes. She loves those leaves. So do lots of insects. While you're climbing up, look at the bark. Native Americans used it to make birch bark canoes. Birch bark is waterproof. Pulling off a little doesn't harm the tree.

Porky's brushed against a spider web. Some spiders eat white-birch pollen. Now the spider is It, but not for long.

A hummingbird just ate the spider. So now the hummer is It. She's pulling the web apart. She weaves the silk into her nest. There she goes That sugar maple shed's on gives off maple syrup. She's after the sap oozing from that woodpecker hole. That makes the woodpecker It.

This is a pileated woodpecker, created to live in large woods. Cut down some of those woods, and this woodpecker will disappear. Follow him. That caterpillar he picked off the beech tree is full of protein. Good choice. Oops, he missed that ant. Follow the ant.

And here we are again, back at home base — the trillium plant. Want to play again?

You can play Critter Tag almost anyplace outdoors. Sometimes it takes quiet, careful patience. Try it in your yard, garden, or a nearby woodlot or related areas.

Woodland Threats.

The following are the things can destroy the kinds of woodlots where we just played critter

- Acid rain caused by gases from cars and factories.
- The cutting down of trees to make room for highways, houses and malls.
- Groundwater pollution, as well as insecticides from lawns and farms.

NATURES WONDERLAND

"CONSCIENCE IN CONFLICT"

That was the convention theme many years ago. It related to our ideal understanding of nature and humanity, over against the indiscriminate way we did and continue to destroy the whole thereof; does it remain only a dream or fantasy of our minds, or are we continuing to fool ourselves? If we sincerely want to retain Nature's Wonderland as a reality, then our "Conscience in Conflict" will have to remain "in gear" in everything we do regarding the same. Effective treatment must begin at home and, in all reality, must begin with respecting all of life in every form, beginning with humanity. If we cannot responsibly and respectfully regard even human life, how can we begin to deal responsibly and respectfully with that of nature and the environment as a whole?

Has anything really changed since then?

Numerous windmill turbines are springing up in many areas. There are restrictions for placing them on farmlands, but it is all right to destroy thousands upon thousands of productive farmland to build residential developments the size of large cities; lets not neglect to mention the size of the homes. These can be built on rockier and or hillier land, just look at cities in BC or towns as in Iqaluit With the arrival of the chainsaw and humungous equipment many years ago, forests throughout all of Canada continue to be indiscriminately cut completely clear, at the cost of ALL of nature and wildlife. The two southwestern counties which

many years ago were all native hardwood forests have no native trees left to speak of. All of this for whose benefit or purpose? But by all means we must protect the rainforest! What rights have we to dictate that?

In addition, all of our natural resources, what's left of them, have been and are continuing to be totally mismanaged and undermined!

Climate change has always existed and will remain a constant. Well to do countries have created astronomical degrees of pollution causing major natural destruction. The world leaders at the present Copenhagen climate change debate are unwilling to make any drastic change in pollution reduction; are we, the people?

— This was written by Harm the "mysterious" person I once knew and still do. Harm used to write editorials quite often. What is the similarity, has anyone ever figured out the connection?

COLOURED CARNATIONS

Source: kidzone.ws/science/carnations

NEEDED:

- 24 hours
- A few white carnations
- Flower vase(s)
- Food coloring
- Water

Directions

- Fill a vase 1/4 full of water.
- Add a fair amount of food coloring (10 to 20 drops) or more if your vases are large
- Put a flower in each vase and let it sit for a day. Just like you would for any cut flower, have an adult trim the stem at an angle before placing it in the vase
- Check back every few hours to see how it's working.
- At the end of your experiment, examine the whole plant carefully (stem, leaves, buds, petals, etc). What parts can you see the food color in?

What Happened?

Most plants absorb or "drink" water from the ground through their "hair" roots. The water travels up the stem of the plant into the leaves and flowers. The plant uses the water to make food.

When a flower is cut, it no longer has its roots. But the stem of the flower is still able to "drink" up the water by absorption and still provide it to the leaves and flowers.

Experimented with red, blue, yellow and green food coloring. You might observe that the red and blue colours were the fastest and that the green color was the slowest. If your carnation blooms don't start to show color in about 6 hours, add a few more drops of food coloring and see if that helps to observe the changes.

RECYCLED TIN CAN CANDLES

Source: home.howstuffworks.com

You probably already have the tools to turn an empty can into a hanging lantern. You'll need a hammer and nails, wire (or a light, strong chain) and wire cutters, pliers and a freezer. You may also want oil-based primer and enamel paint, but that's up to you.

To start, fill a clean, empty can with water and place it in the freezer. When the water has frozen solid, remove the can.

Use the hammer and nails to punch patterns into the sides of the can. The ice keeps the tin from denting. You can create any pattern you want. If you're skilled with a blowtorch or rotor tool, you can go even further.

The more holes you make, the more light your lantern will produce, but the more its structural integrity may be compromised. Sometimes designers do that deliberately. Using tin snips, some crafters make parallel vertical cuts in the sides of a can to create a fluted section. The lantern can then be vertically compressed to create sides that bell out. Use safety gloves when you try this -- the metal will be sharp.

Punch holes in the top of the can to attach the wire or chain. Use the pliers to secure the lantern to its hanger. The length of the hanger is up to you, but if the lantern will be outdoors, you may want to keep hangers short to reduce wind hazards. Conversely, if the lantern has a short hanger, you'll need to avoid hanging it from flammable structures.

Drive a short nail up through the bottom of the can. You'll use this nail to secure the candle. Push the candle down onto the nail to anchor it.

If you want your lanterns to be colorful, as well as a bit more waterproof, paint them first with a primer and then with rustproof outdoor enamel paint. If you plan to paint your lantern, you may want to start by punching holes that are a bit larger -- layers of paint can obscure details. You can also flatten the cans and assemble them in panels.

Variety. Tin cans come in numerous shapes and sizes, and most of them can be turned into lanterns. Squat tuna cans, petite tomato paste cans, and large coffee tins and standard soup cans, can all light up the night. Just make sure the candle fits inside, and you're ready to go.

RECYCLED TIN CAN CANDLEHOLDERS

Source: home.howstuffworks.com

A tin can candleholder works in exactly the same way as a lantern, except it isn't suspended from anything. At night, the patterns in a punched tin candleholder spring to life -- the perforations will send beautiful light over any nearby surface. Even short, squat tins can enjoy a second life as the bases for tea lights.

Of course, you may be using a candleholder indoors, where the rusticated-and-rusted aesthetic may not work so well. You might have to put a bit more energy into decorating it, so as not to convey the impression that you've left kitchen trash all over the place. You'll also want to be especially vigilant about rust sealants, as an indoor candleholder may come into contact with tablecloths, furniture and other surfaces that you'd rather not stain.

As before, you'll be freezing the can and then punching holes into it. For a really easy option, use a can opener to make wedge-shaped perforations. If a tin is painted with a design, leave the design on for color and vintage charm. Experiment with punching out patterns that coordinate with the painted design, so that the candleholder is attractive even without emitting light.

Metal can heat up, so make sure you put the tin can candleholder on a heatproof surface. Two beautiful options are stone and ceramic tile. Visit a local flooring supplier for remnants. An unadorned piece of slate or shale can be a strikingly modern way to display a candle.

If you do want a rustic look for an indoor candleholder, go all the way. Spray the can with several layers of enamel in gradations of black, brown and rust red, so you can achieve the color of rust but still have a can that's safe to handle. Mount it on reclaimed wood or naked stone. The important thing is to make the rustication look deliberate, as opposed to the simple product of household neglect

Lighting the Way: The stability of tin cans makes them wonderful floor and ground lights. A row of perforated tin candleholders is a gorgeous way to line a garden walk or the baseboard of a sunroom. With any floor light, you run the risk that a guest will accidentally kick the candle over, so put some rocks, gravel or sand into the base of each can to give it added weight. And remember to add a heatproof layer beneath indoor lights.

RECYCLED TIN CAN FLOWERPOTS

Source: home.howstuffworks.com

As any gardener knows, a container garden can get expensive in a hurry. Turning old tin cans into flowerpots can help you alleviate that expense. You can use small cans to start seedlings. Large cans can be lasting planters.

There's not much work involved -- after all, a tin can is already a container. You'll need to poke a few holes in the bottom for drainage. Again, filling the can with water and freezing it will help you poke those holes without creating dents.

A flower pot is going to come into contact with a great deal of water, so unless you like the look of aging, rusting metal, you may want to coat your tin can flower pot with enamel. If you don't want to use a spray enamel, start with gesso or primer.

Spray the can with a clear polymer sealant if you like the look of naked metal but don't want rust. If you're feeling especially arty -- and you have some time on your hands -- you can use a power drill with sanding disks and a wire brush attachment to create a brushed metal look. You'll need to seal that surface well, though, as even light condensation can rust it. Use safety goggles; wire brushes routinely lose bristles.

Because of the stain risks of rust and water, it's a good idea to place a tin can flowerpot -- even an enameled one -- on a base of some sort. Clear plastic plant bases are readily available. If you'd like to avoid buying new plastic, head to a thrift store or garage sale and buy an assortment of colorful plates to use under your new planters.

You can also hang a tin can flowerpot. Punch three holes, evenly spaced, near the lip of the can. Attach a length of chain to each hole, and then join the chains over the center of the pot with a loop and an S-hook. Remember, the chains must bear the weight of soil and water, not just the can. Make sure they'll be up to the task.

HOT CROSS BUNS

Many Easter customs began long before the Resurrection of Christ. They celebrated the arrival of Spring, and the early Christians adapted these customs for their own use. The Hot Cross Buns once served in England only on Good Friday. Lent dates back thousands of years. Ancient Greeks made small cakes with crosses on top as offerings to their gods. It found its way to England and was adopted in the 14th century by a baker monk.

TEN NEAT THINGS ABOUT LEAVES

Source: icangarden.com

Defining leaves. Most of us recognize a plant by its flower, but in horticulture school, students are taught to identify plants by all their characteristics, and foliage is among the most complex. Leaf shape, arrangement, venation, margin, tip and surface are all classified. The great thing about getting to know all the terminology-aside from making you a sparkling conversationalist-is that you can imagine what the foliage looks like from the description in a catalogue without pictures.

Shape. In higher education, leaves are not heart-shaped; they are cordate if the petiole (leaf stem) is opposite the heart point of the leaf and obcordate if the petiole is at the heart point. A palmate leaf, shaped like the palm of your hand, is differentiated from a digitate leaf, upon which the divisions are more like fingers. If the divisions closest to the petiole are further divided, that leaf is said to be pedate.

Petioles. A leaf can be petiolate (have a leaf stem) or sessile (attach directly to the plant without its own little stem). Decurrent sessile leaves wrap around the plant stem at the leaf base. Sometimes it looks as though the plant stem goes right through the leaf; this characteristic is known as perfoliate.

Arrangement. The arrangement of leaves along a stem is alternate when each leaf is individually attached at its own point, each pointing in the opposite direction from the last. However, when two leaves are attached at each point, the arrangement is opposite. Three or more leaves at one point and they are said to be whorled.

Venation. The form the veins take is another identifier. The simplest forms are palmate, where the veins branch off like a tree; parallel, where the veins all run the length of the leaf, not intersecting; and pinnate, where secondary veins branch off from the main vein in opposite pairs.

Margin. A completely smooth leaf has an entire margin. If it has coarse teeth, it is dentate, but if it is finely toothed, it is denticulate. These are different from leaves that are serrate-the teeth point toward the tip of the plant. And more finely serrated margin is serrulate, and when the teeth have teeth of their own, the margin is said to be doubly serrate. Of course, there is also a slate of terms for leaves with curvier margins.

Tip. Pointy leaf tips may be acute, where the angle of the point is less than 90 degrees; acuminate, where the point is longer and tapered; or mucronate, where it looks like the leaf is going to have a rounded tip, then suddenly a little point juts out.

Surface. The surface of your leaf may be glabrous (smooth), rugose (deeply wrinkled),

glaucous (blue-tinged from a waxy coating) or pubescent (hairy-yes, really).

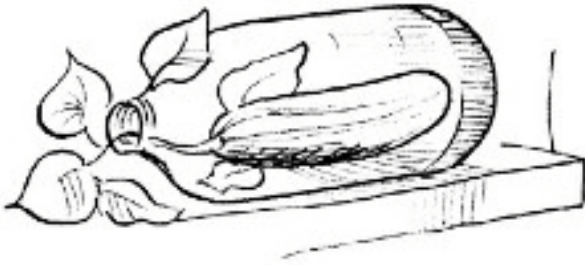
Hairy leaves. Tomentose leaves have soft, woolly, matted hairs. Hispid leaves have stiff hairs. Sericeous leaves are silky, with fine, straight hairs that lie flat against the leaf. Scabrous leaves are rough to the touch. The hairs of barbellate leaves are (ouch!) barbed.

Modified leaves. Petals are leaves that have been modified to attract pollinators. Bulbs are leaves that have been modified to store energy. Some tendrils on climbing plants are modified leaves (though on some species the tendrils are modified stems or petioles). The spines of cactus are commonly said to be modified leaves, though some botanists take issue with that description.

CUCUMBER IN A BOTTLE

Source: home.howstuffworks.com

Almost anyone can grow cucumbers in a garden, but you can do something trickier -- growing a cucumber in a bottle as a gardening activity with kids. It's not as hard as you might think, and your kids will be amazed.



What You'll Need:

- Two-liter soda bottle
- Soil
- Cucumber seeds
- Nut pick
- Water
- Sunshine

Step 1: Take a two-liter plastic soda bottle and poke several ventilation holes in it.

Step 2: When cucumbers start to develop, gently insert them (still attached to their vines) through the bottle's top.

Step 3: Shade the bottle with some cucumber leaves so that the small cukes won't cook from too much heat.

Step 4: Water every few days.

You might have to try this with several cucumbers before you get one to full size -- but eventually it will work!

SUNNY FLOWER GARDEN

Source: home.howstuffworks.com

Plants from the nursery can make a colorful splash as a sunny flower garden in your yard. This garden activity for kids has a great payoff and can launch them on a lifetime of gardening for fun.

What You'll Need:

1 metre x 1 metre +/- 4' x 3' garden patch

Shovel

Bagged compost

mulch (optional)

Plants

Trowel

Hose

Small sprinkler

Step 1: Choose a garden spot that gets six or more hours of sun a day.

Step 2: Pull weeds, and dig up soil until it crumbles.

Step 3: Spread a one-inch layer of bagged compost over the soil and mix it in.

Step 4: Buy plants at a garden center. Buy small, healthy annuals that aren't flowering.

Step 5: Set your plants on the bed and arrange them. Give the young plants plenty of room.

Step 6: With your trowel, dig a hole for each plant.

Step 7: Turn the pot over, and tap the plant into your hand. Loosen the root ball with your fingers, and set the roots into the soil.

Step 8: Water your plants with a sprinkler every few days.

Step 9: Pick your flowers often to keep the plants blooming.

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