



Woodbridge Horticultural Society Newsletter



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Issue 68, June 2022

The Earth Laughs in Flowers.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

SPEAKER JUNE 20

Heinke Thiessen, on Perennials That Wow.

GARDENING CHORES

There are quite a few things to consider before rejuvenating old potting soil. First, determine whether the plants you grew in this soil beforehand were heavy or light feeders. Take note of any soil problems you may have had throughout the past year, as some plants are notorious for bacterial infections or insect infestations. If so, it is best not to reuse it. Check the soil level in each pot, as it should be topped up. Add perlite, lime and gypsum; or, buy new bags of good quality potting mix.

Spring is the optimal time to divide perennials. As soon as small leaves have formed at the plant's base, it's time to split it. Use a shovel or garden fork to dig up the root ball. Use a serrated blade to divide the root ball into as many pieces needed. Make sure there's at least one strong set of leaves in each division. Transplant divisions to a sunny spot, or shade, depending on the plant's needs. Water well until the plant is established.

Though clay soil is not always a gardener's best friend, it is made of the finest soil particles, which bond together, trapping both water and essential nutrients like calcium, magnesium, and potassium. Plants that thrive in clay soil need to be tolerant of pooling water and need to be able to grow with minimum nutrients. Squeeze a moist handful of garden soil in your fist. If it feels heavy, sticky and forms a ball that holds its shape, the soil has too much clay. To give new plants a good head start, top-dress soil with a little compost and then let nature take its course.

NATIVE PLANTS

This year, incorporate some native plants in your garden. Native flowers will attract local pollinators and thrive in clay soil, leading to a beautiful garden.

Native plants have numerous benefits, and generally require little maintenance. Many native plants—mistakenly seen as weeds—offer beautiful showy flowers, produce abundant colorful fruits and seeds, and offer brilliant seasonal changes. Colors range from the pale, thin greens of early spring, to the vibrant yellows and reds of autumn. Lawns and the ubiquitous bark-mulched landscapes are notorious for requiring profuse amounts of artificial fertilizers and synthetic chemical pesticides and herbicides. The traditional suburban lawn has ten times more chemical pesticides per acre than farmland. By choosing native plants for landscaping, you are not only helping wildlife, but you are creating a healthier place for yourself, your family, and your community.





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Landscaping with native plants can combat climate change. In addition to reduced noise and carbon pollution from lawn mower exhaust, many native plants—especially long-living trees like oaks and maples—effectively store the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide.

Because native plants are adapted to local environmental conditions, they save time, money and the most valuable natural resource: water. Other than providing vital habitat for birds, many other wildlife species benefit as well. The colorful array of butterflies and moths—including monarchs, swallowtails, tortoiseshells, and beautiful blues—are all dependent on very specific native plant species. For example, monarch butterflies rely on the native plant milkweed. Native plants provide nectar for pollinators including hummingbirds, native bees, butterflies, moths, and bats. They provide protective shelter for many mammals. Nuts, seeds, and fruits produced by these plants offer essential foods for all forms of wildlife.

Easy-care native plants include: Goat's Beard, Canada Wild Ginger, New England Aster, False Indigo, Coreopsis, Echinacea, Joe-Pye Weed, Blazing Star, Cardinal Flower, Canada Goldenrod and Cinnamon Fern.

HUMMINGBIRDS

Hummingbirds prefer plants that produce tube-shaped flowers, as they contain the most nectar. While the old wisdom about plants with red or orange flowers is true, hummingbirds will visit blossoms of any hue, as long as they provide plenty of nectar. Adding perennials for hummingbirds is an easy way to benefit both birds and humans. We get the joy of seeing these colorful birds up close.

To keep a steady supply of lettuce for your summer salad bowl, try succession planting well into the fall. This includes carrots, beets, beans, but the easiest is lettuce. Instead of planting a large crop all at once—after all, how much salad can you eat in one sitting?—sow your favourite lettuce seeds every two weeks or so.

VOLUNTEERING

Maria Durigon prepared an eye-catching display at the entrance to the Wallace House, in the two front planters. Her choices of snake plant, ivy and colourful coleus and sedum are relatively drought tolerant, so it's easy to rely on rain or a once a week soaking by whoever works in the garden. Thanks Maria!

SUBMISSIONS

If you have anything you'd like added to the newsletter, please call or email Mary no later than one week before the next meeting.

