OTTAWA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020

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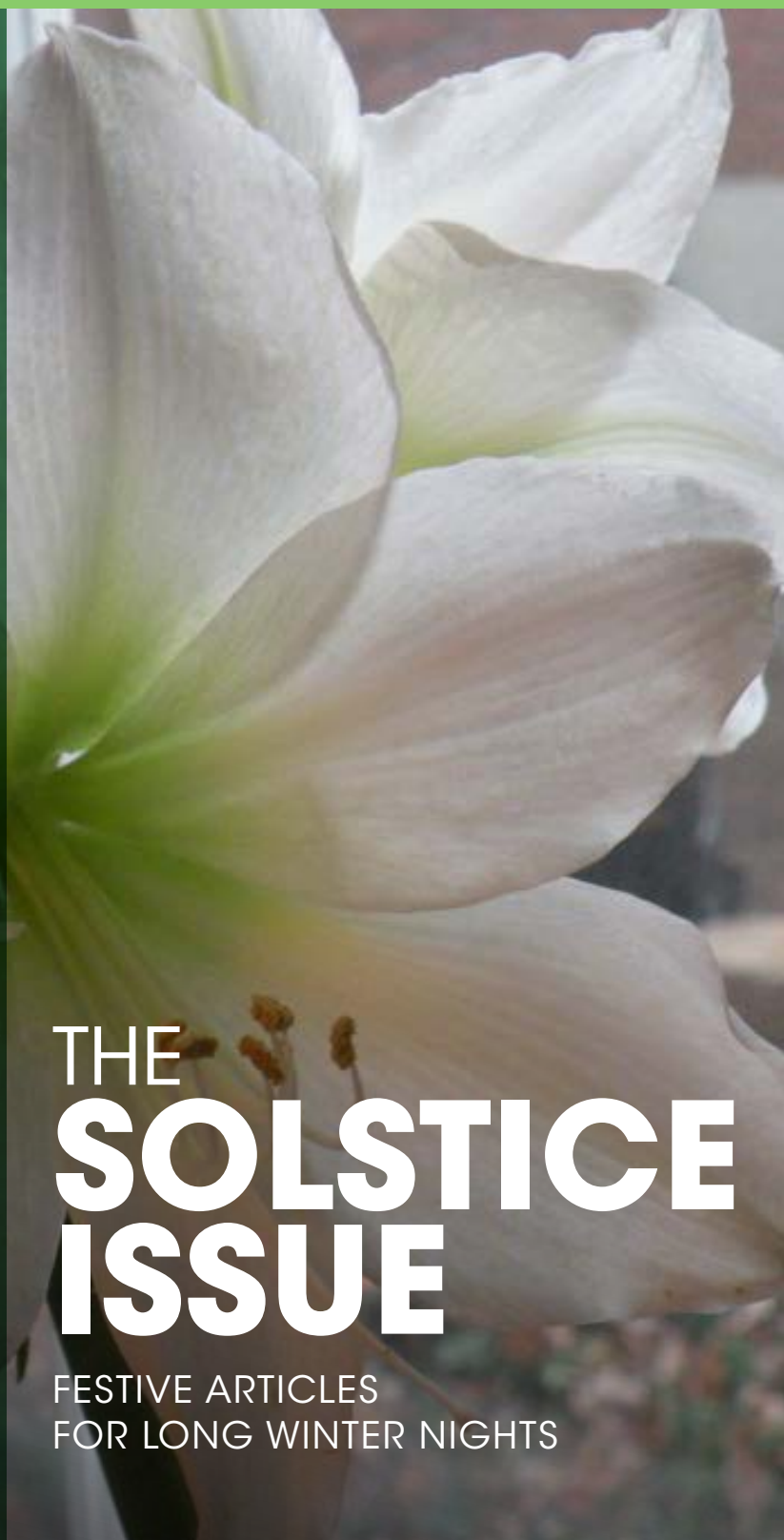


THE SOLSTICE ISSUE

FESTIVE ARTICLES
FOR LONG WINTER NIGHTS

NATURE'S SEASONAL GIFT — AMARYLLIS

BLAINE MARCHAND

As night begins to darken earlier and earlier, it throws a black pall over our windows and our mood. At this time of year, we need brightness in our lives. And so, our streets are cheered by a rainbow of strung Christmas lights; our homes perfumed by bejewelled and bedecked pine boughs.

Nature will not stand to be outdone by artifice. Amaryllis, at least in my family, were valued and a wonderful Christmas gift most welcomed by our mother. With evocative names, such as Apple Blossom, Red Lion, Salsa, Summertime and Fairy Tale, among others, the lure of their gigantic blooms in a time of shadows is so appealing. Their colour range is simply remarkable, from a delicate pink and white (Apple Blossom), a bold velvet red (Red Lion), the ruffled flare of a dancer's red and white skirt (Salsa), mouth-watering as watermelon (Summertime) or simply a striped sensation (Fairy Tale).

Belonging to the family Amaryllidaceae, *Hippeastrum* is a genus of about 90 species and over 600 hybrids and cultivars of perennial herbaceous bulbous plants. For many years, there was confusion among botanists over the generic names *Amaryllis* and *Hippeastrum*, which resulted in the common name amaryllis being used for cultivars sold as indoor Christmas flowering bulbs in the northern climes. (Note: In contrast, the generic name *Amaryllis* applies to bulbs from South Africa, usually grown outdoors in tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas.)

Hippeastrum were traditionally propagated by seed or offset bulbils; however, today, commercial ventures largely use *in vitro* techniques, or split the bulb into sections. Like many such showy flowers, the amaryllis, as we know it, has been intensely bred and cultivated, in its case since the early 19th

century, to produce larger and more colourful, showy flowers.

One of the reasons for its popularity is that the amaryllis is so easy to grow indoors. Varieties offered range from dwarf, just 20cm tall, to gigantic 75cm tall specimens. Whether short or lofty, all are grown in the same way. For a spectacular Christmas show, bulbs should be planted in October, as the unfurling of their trumpets begins eight weeks after planting. Although most bulbs sold in stores come complete with pots and a potting mixture, amaryllis actually prefers a rich growing medium that drains well. This can be achieved by adding grit or sand into the multi-purpose mixture provided. The bulb should be secured snuggly in a pot only a few centimetres larger than the bulb.

Once potted up, place the amaryllis in a warm sunny spot and let nature perform its wonder. It is true that once flowering begins, the stalks become top-heavy and need to be supported with some form of support. Even an unwound wire coat hanger works, as my mother used to do. It should be noted that amaryllis are toxic to cats, so they need to be grown away from where cats can reach them. (Is such a thing possible?)

When they have finished blooming, don't throw the bulb away. Simply remove the faded flowers, being careful not to injure any emerging leaves. The leaves replenish the bulb so it can bloom again next year. Keep it in the sunniest spot possible, as the more sun it receives, the bigger the blooms will be next time. When both the leaves and stalk turn yellow, stop feeding and watering the bulb. Remove the spent foliage and store the bulb in a cool, dry place through the summer. In the autumn, begin watering it again. Or, once the outside temperature is above 10 °C at night, you can bring your amaryllis into the garden. Place it in a sunny spot, keep it well fed and watered so it will produce more leaves. Just make sure to bring your amaryllis indoors before the first frost, preferably in mid-to late September as the bulb optimally needs 8-10 weeks of rest. After this time frame, in late October, move the bulb to a warm, sunny spot in your house and water thoroughly. You will be rewarded with another spectacular show just in time for Christmas.

When I was posted to Pakistan, amaryllis bulbs were planted into the gardens and they put on a spectacular show. I decided, why not try this here? And so when the foliage dies back, I store the bulbs in my basement and then, in spring, I plant them in a group in my garden

My 99 year old mother and her white amaryllis

and let them put on their show (see photo on previous page). I remove them in the autumn, put them into my basement and let the foliage die down. The following spring, I replant them out of doors, making sure to add compost and well-rotted manure mixed into the soil a few inches below the bulb to give it that extra boost.

Through the centuries, the amaryllis has symbolized beauty and love. The Victorians imbued it with the qualities of strength and determination due to the plant's height. Amaryllis is also a Greek female name meaning "to sparkle", which it certainly does, perched regally on a window sill in the darkest time of the year.

A very Merry Christmas to you all.

Holiday FLORAL DECOR

by Vanessa Bishop
of Wild Willy's Plants and Flowers

The Holiday season is upon us. In addition to being a time of love and togetherness, for gardeners, it is also a time to cherish mother nature and the winter equinox. This year we have an opportunity to create holiday magic in new and creative ways. Let us celebrate our love of plants and flowers by decorating our homes inside and out, with extra love and care. 'Tis the season to enjoy the beauty and magical energy of mother nature - why not take this time to create a winter oasis of your own.

Christmas Berry

Natural garlands, wreaths, winter urns and centerpieces are staples of holiday decor. Branches of rosehips, ilex, dogwood, and birch can be retrieved from your garden or can be foraged from the nature that surrounds you. Combined with evergreens like cedar, juniper, pine, and balsam, which are often available at your local floral shop or garden center, these beautiful branches can come together to create stunning and natural arrangements for inside, or out.

As the longer and more sunlit days of Autumn fade, colourful blooms can be a wonderful option to brighten up an indoor space. Some holiday favourites include Christmas cactus, cyclamen, poinsettia, amaryllis, and paperwhite bulbs. Evergreen plants and herbs are also available at this time of year to enjoy indoors. Cypress, Alberta spruce, boxwood, Norfolk pine, rosemary and lavender can also be used as unconventional Christmas trees, and decorated with ornaments of all kinds. These plants provide a beautiful assortment of textures and fragrances to enjoy throughout the season.

Another creative and festive use of plants could be a yule or advent centerpiece. A woodland plant assortment arranged amongst candles would be a beautiful natural addition to your table. Wintergreen *(Gaultheria procumbens)*, a beautiful ground cover with bright red berries; frosty ferns *(Selaginella kraussiana variegatus),* a natural moss plant with what looks like a dusting of fresh snow; kalanchoes, in rich red with variegated leaves; and cyclamen, with

their upright blooms in various colors and leaves in the shape of hearts - these would all make a beautiful natural living arrangement that will last on and on. As with the urns and arrangements mentioned above, yule or advent centerpieces can also be created with cut or foraged greenery and branches. The four candles on the Advent arrangement represent hope, love, joy and peace, and can be a wonderful testament to what we hope the new year will bring. There are lots of ideas online available with pictures and videos to inspire you and guide you through the creation of your own centerpiece.

Last, but not at all least, plants are a beautiful gift to share with our loved ones. A lovely amaryllis bulb, available often as a single bulb, in a planting kit, or encased in a beautiful wax seal, can both brighten a room, and remind the recipient of how appreciated they are.

We hope that you enjoy this beautiful season and all of the creativity that it inspires, and wish you a healthy and prosperous gardening year ahead!

When is a Weed **Not a Weed?**

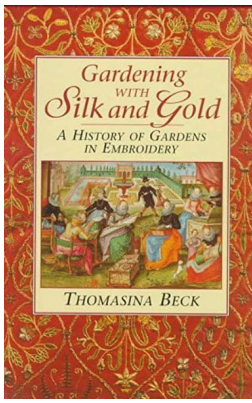
Writing by Roberta Woods © 2020
Photography by Robin Woods © 2020

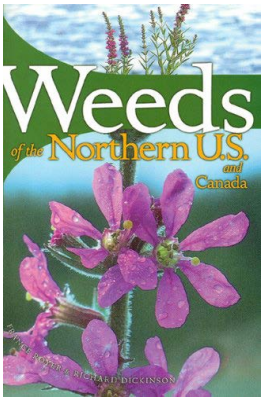
Like many gardeners, I have always enjoyed a contemplative hour or so uprooting weeds. The move to a Toronto condominium might have meant an end to weeding had not an opportunity arisen soon after our arrival for both of us to volunteer in a community garden. But when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, on grounds of safety, we gave up using public transport. This decision not only meant foregoing our weekly Saturday morning weeding sessions, it also confined any outdoor activity to an area within walking distance of where we lived.

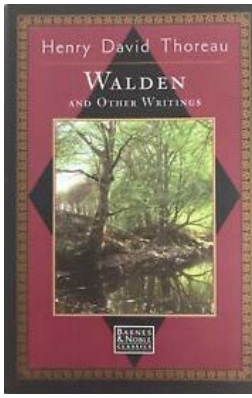
However, on our frequent "fitness" walks we soon discovered that we had by no means left weeds behind. They grew everywhere. Until that time, I had always believed that I knew a weed when I saw one. But then came the moment of truth. As soon as I began trying to identify many of these local weeds I had to admit to a woeful ignorance. In order to rectify what we both considered to be a serious oversight, we now took our exercise with the objective of remedying our neglect regarding weed identification. Robin took his camera and I carried the modern-day equivalent of a field naturalist's *vasculum* - a plastic bag inside a cloth bag to house the specimens for later identification at home.

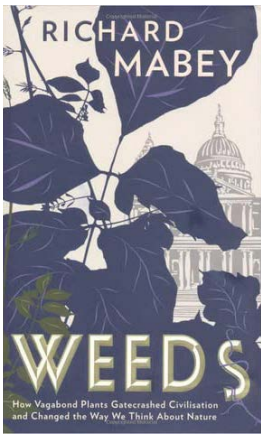
It is likely that we would have continued to identify our local weeds in the same informal manner had not the Editor of the OHS Newsletter gotten in touch regarding an article for the upcoming digital edition. Almost immediately we both recognised that our early findings could well stand as the basis of an expanded inquiry into our world of local weeds. Such an approach could, perhaps, reveal why weeds had not attracted our attention in the same way that wild and garden flowers always had. Plus, how could we have overlooked naming plants thought fit only for removal when we both knew quite well that many of them had, at other times, been valued for their medicinal and edible properties?

In "Weeds" Richard Mabey explains that it was the cultivation of the soil that gave rise to the idea of a class of plants we call weeds. The first cultivators would have been aware, early on, that along with the germination of their selected seeds there appeared unwanted species. Plus, they would also have realised that a bountiful harvest depended on the repeated removal of these unwelcome plants.









Since then, there have been many attempts to define the plants we recognise (or not) as weeds. Perhaps the most well known definition, and one that allows for a reappraisal,

is that by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) who says that a weed is "a plant whose virtues have yet to be discovered." In contrast, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) in his essay "The Bean-Fields" likens the act of weeding to a military operation. On his daily visits to the "beanrows," the beans recognise that he has come to rescue them from the enemy, the weeds. And he shows no mercy as he chops up the weeds with his hoe, exposes their roots to the sun before consigning the "weedy dead" to the trenches. Somewhat related to Thoreau's imagery is the legislation enacted in Canada at both the Federal and Provincial levels that confers legal status as a weed on many plants. Justification for these laws includes competition for water and nutrients and that some of them are alternate hosts for viruses known to infect food crops. But perhaps the most gracious approach to an understanding of weeds is that by Mary Delany (1700-1788). Delany was an artist, an avid gardener, and an accomplished needlewoman. In 1740, Delany was "particularly struck" by the embroidery decorating the Duchess of Queensbury's petticoat. The "fanciful treatment" of the weeds and flowers embroidered in "white satin" so impressed Delany that she wished she had thought of it first.

Today, there is a widely held belief that a weed is a weed, no questions asked. But when even a small sample of definitions reveals a broad range of opinions, we decided that an inquiry of our own into the nature of so-called weeds might be more satisfying. We also decided that the simplest investigative method would be to focus on one species and then create a portrait from whatever pertinent material we came across. However, by the time we agreed to write an article for the Newsletter, the growing season was well advanced and many of the weeds were looking decidedly scruffy. Fortunately, the dandelion was still looking its usual cheerful self so that was the weed we chose.

A Portrait Of The Dandelion

Taraxacum officinale

The dandelion is a member of the Compositae/Asteraceae Family, introduced from Europe and Asia and now widespread across Canada. It has also been named blow ball, face clock, pee-a-bed, lion's tooth, cankerwort, and Irish daisy. In French: pissenlit and dent-de-lion. *Taraxacum officinale* has a close relative, *Taraxacum lacerum*, the Lacerate, Ragged, or Greenland dandelion. It is an arctic to subarctic indigenous species that can be found in Churchill, Manitoba growing along the sandy beaches. The dandelion is a perennial plant with a long, fleshy tap root; the leaves have conspicuous triangular lobes; and the flower heads are composed of numerous very tiny flowers called florets.

Officially, the dandelion has legislative status as a weed in the Provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec and Saskatchewan, despite being on the verge of extinction in the latter. And in Ontario, even though it is not a classified weed, many people regard the dandelion as such, and it is a target of the lawn industry.

In 2009, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs conducted a comparative study to test the efficacy of the weed-killer FIESTA™ on several weeds, including the dandelion, growing in turf. The active ingredient in FIESTA™ is iron, which causes the

The Book Nook

39 WINTER TITLES SUGGESTED BY THE OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR OHS MEMBERS

Ottawa Public Library / Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa

The Collection Development staff at the Ottawa Public Library have put together a list of materials for OHS members. This list includes new titles added to the OPL collection.

Among the materials this quarter are books, DVDs and other materials relating to:

- **House Plants**
- **Orchids, peonies, dahlias, and vintage roses**
- **Kitchen, vegetable, and herb gardening**
- **Flower arranging**
- **Biodynamic gardening**
- **The greenhouse of the future**
- **Native trees, shrubs, and vines**
- **American Gardens, by Monty Don**
- **Garden design**
- **Plant propogation**
- **Plant therapy**

Click on the link below to see the complete list from the Library. This also allows you to view availability and place a hold from the link.

https://ottawa.bibliocommons.com/list/share/354296247_collection_development/1758300079_ottawa_horticultural_society_winter_titles

dandelion leaves to turn black and shrivel up. In the spring of 2010, when the effect of the spraying was assessed, it was found that almost 100% of the dandelions had grown back.

Despite its notoriety as a weed, the dandelion has long been recognised as a nutritious food plant. The roots can be eaten grated in a salad or prepared and cooked like cultivated root vegetables. The leaves are useful for salads, soups and a blended drink made from tomato juice, Worcestershire Sauce and Tabasco. The unopened flower buds can be eaten raw or added to pancakes or fritters. The flower buds make an admirable wine.

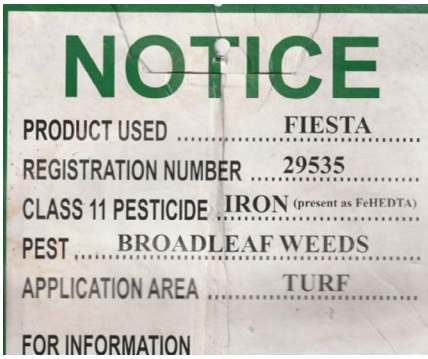
These days, since both urban and rural pollution is ubiquitous, the best way to obtain dandelions is to grow one's own. Seeds of *Taraxacum officinale* and of the French dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale sativa*, are available from Richters of Goodwood, ON. Since the leaves of all species of dandelion quickly become tough and bitter, one way to avoid this is to protect the plants from direct sunlight with straw.

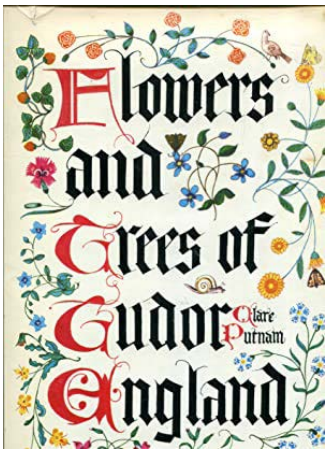
In 1652, Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654) published the first edition of his now-famous herbal. In accordance with his astrological beliefs that both human disease and the herbs known to alleviate the symptoms or provide a cure, Culpeper assigned the "government" of the dandelion to "the dominion of Jupiter." In order to extract the active ingredients from the leaves and roots, Culpeper recommended steeping them in white wine. Alternatively, the leaves could be chopped and then boiled with a few Alisanders, i.e. Alexanders, *Smyrnium olustrum*. These decoctions relieved

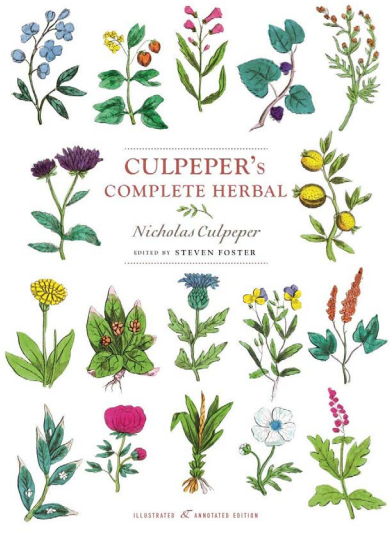
obstructions in the "liver, gall, and spleen" along with associated diseases such as "the jaundice and hypochondriac." Consumption, cachexia, abscesses, and "inward ulcers" were also treatable with dandelion medicine. A drink made from distilled dandelion water relieved pestilential fevers.

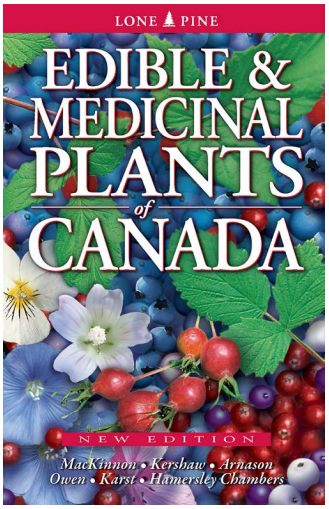
Today, the dandelion continues to hold an important place in herbal medicine. Dandelions are a rich source of vitamins A, C, B, E, and electrolytes such as calcium and potassium. The roots are said to lower blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol. They also have anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory properties. The milky juice cures warts. But instead of Culpeper's description for "opening the passages of urine," the modern dandelion is described as a diuretic.

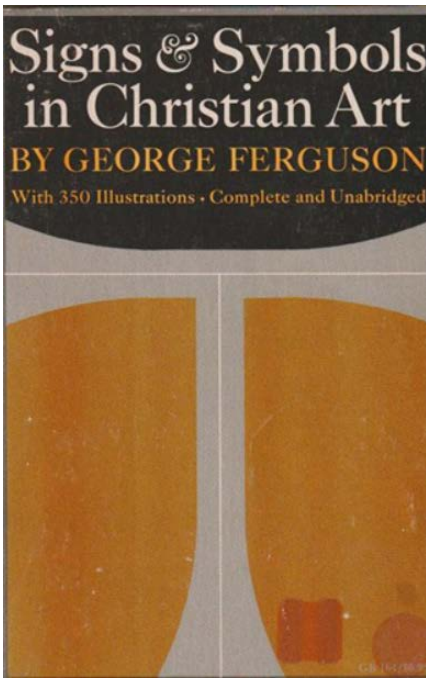
Culpeper decided against including illustrations for his herbal despite an already well-established convention that to do so prevented herbalists from making serious mistakes over identification. One example of an illustrated herbal is that compiled and published by Elizabeth Blackwell (c.1700-1758) in weekly parts between 1737 and 1739. With the assistance of friends associated with the Chelsea Physic Garden, Blackwell created botanically correct images for the herbs she chose and gave her herbal the title "A Curious Herbal." She sketched the specimen plants, engraved the plates, hand-coloured the copies, inscribed them with pertinent details, and dealt with prospective purchasers. Blackwell's botanically correct dandelion, rendered in her signature style, graces the first page of the herbal. Her design displays the characteristic rosette of basal leaves, and six stalks show the development of the flowers from the bud to the clock-carrying seeds. Blackwell's attention to the accuracy of its botanical features would have resolved any doubts over the identity of the dandelion.

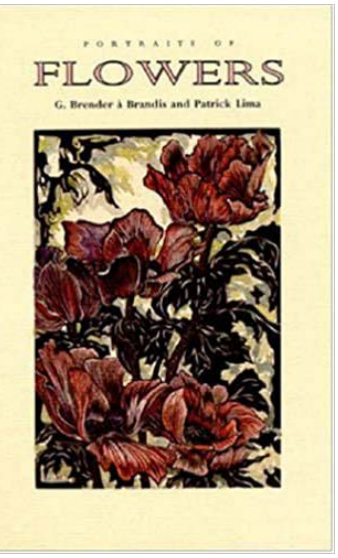


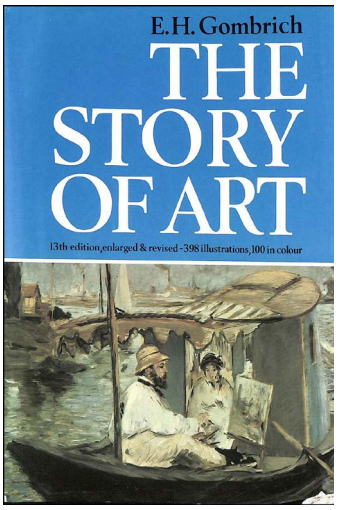












In 1503, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1582) painted in water colours the well-known *Das Grosse Rasenstück* - The Great Piece of Turf. Although at the time Dürer's contemporaries regarded his subject matter as "modest," in fact, Dürer was the first European artist to create a "truly naturalistic" painting. With its low viewpoint and botanically correct plants it would be easy to assume that Dürer had painted it out of doors. But it is known that Dürer painted "The Turf" indoors in his Nuremberg workshop.

While some of Dürer's sketches and studies confirm that his artistic vision encompassed an appreciation of the natural world, art historian Ernst Gombrich suggests that the undertaking of a meticulous study of the plants chosen for "The Turf" enabled the artist to advance his engraving skills. Dürer's ultimate objective, Gombrich argues, was the creation of realistic but spiritually appealing images of the Holy Family. What Gombrich does not take into consideration, however, is why Dürer chose to depict three fading dandelion heads enclosed within a faintly discernable, upended, flattened triangle.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the era of the Renaissance, there was a firmly held belief in the omniscience of God. Christians visualized the hand of God in everything they encountered whether animate or inanimate. With regard to the dandelion, it was understood to be a "bitter" herb and, as such, became a symbol of Christ's suffering at the time of the Crucifixion. The number three was said by Pythagoras (c.570-c.495 BCE) to be "the number of completion, expressive of a beginning, a middle, and an end." Thus, in Christian doctrine, the number three became a divine number associated with the Trinity and with the three days Christ spent entombed after the Crucifixion. The Trinity is also symbolised by the triangle. Although there is no certainty about the manner in which the design for "The Turf" evolved in Dürer's mind, it does seem plausible that he would have been familiar with Christian symbolism and perhaps he envisaged using the dandelion in a future composition.

Also in the 16th century, the dandelion attracted the attention of an anonymous artist who painted plants in a medieval, stylistic manner. Elias Ashmole (1617-1692), of The Ashmolean Museum fame, acquired a manuscript of this artist's work composed of fifty vellum leaves, now housed in The Bodleian Library at Oxford. Of the fifty leaves, thirty-two have been pub-

lished in "Flowers and Trees of Tudor England" by Clare Putnam. The dandelion, entitled in medieval Latin as *Dens Leonis*, is placed alphabetically along with its floral companions and is depicted in a rather stiff, boxy style believed to be representative of the art of the "Low Countries." That style took precedence over botanical accuracy is evident in the artist's placement of the leaves alternately along the flower stem instead of being grouped together as a basal rosette. The vellum leaves are believed to have comprised a Book of Patterns used by an illustrator of manuscripts to show to prospective patrons. Today, the manuscript leaves are considered to be "outstanding examples of the illustrative art of the 16th century." The inclusion of a portrait of the dandelion among other plants in the Pattern Book speaks of its enduring importance in Christian art. And, from a modern perspective, the dandelion had the honour of being painted on vellum.

The dandelion has continued to attract the attention of artists right up to the present day. One example is a wood engraving by Ontario artist Gerard Brender à Brandis. On a studio visit two years ago, Brender à Brandis explained the process of making a print from a wood block engraving. His first step is to make sketches of appealing plants and for this, he keeps his sketch book at hand, at all times, and in all places. He prefers boxwood for the engraving and hand colours some of his prints. To my way of thinking, his choice of an upright rectangle to depict a dandelion permits a sequential arrangement of the stages that make up the dandelion's life cycle. Beginning with an immature, unopened bud, the design progresses to the fully opened flower before decline and death take over. But the placement of the dandelion clock at the pinnacle of the rectangle draws the viewer's attention to the parachutes, surely an extraordinary feat of botanical engineering, awaiting an accommodating breeze to ensure the dandelion's survival. The image of the wood engraving of a dandelion by Gerard Brender à Brandis is reproduced with permission of the artist (see previous page).

At the conclusion of our dandelion portrait, Robin and I would like to salute the dandelion by referring OHS members to "Mericarp" by the British artist Paul Morrison. This sculptural representation of the dandelion is constructed from painted marine aluminum and galvanized steel. It reaches ten feet in height and more than five feet at the widest part of its circumference.

Unfortunately, without permission of the artist, copyright restrictions prevent us from reproducing an image here. For those OHS members who are interested in viewing this magnificent tribute to the dandelion, Internet information about the artist is available. But beware of the lion's teeth!

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Note: *Copyright restrictions, except where stated, have prevented the inclusion of images to accompany references to works of art. For those OHS members who would like to view the work of Elizabeth Blackwell see https:||www.bl.uk/collection-items/a/curious-herbal-dandelion.*
To view the dandelion sculpture, Mericarp, by Paul Morrison see Wikipedia.

MISTLETOE — Romancing a Parasite?

by Lori Gandy

What would Christmas be without mistletoe? The plant has a long history and association with fertility and vitality. Ancient Greeks and Romans valued mistletoe for its healing properties. The ancient druids hung mistletoe at this time of year to ward off evil and bring good luck. Norse mythology gives us something closer to our tradition: mistletoe as a symbol of love, romance and friendship. In eighteenth century England, tradition dictated that a berry should be picked from the plant before any kissing could take place. And when the berries ran out, the kissing ended.

https://i.etsystatic.com/9451597/r/il/74e950/1728864967/il_570xN.1728864967_ldiz.jpg

In our time, kissing under the mistletoe is an integral part of our Christmas traditions, even if we are only hanging a fake sprig in a doorway for the comic fun of it.

Things will be different this year of course, with Covid-19 wending its way deeper into our lives and putting the kibosh on many of our Christmas traditions – kissing under the mistletoe surely being one.

BUT WHAT IS IT EXACTLY?

Although the mistletoe plant has a fanciful and romantic reputation, the origin of its name is rather less sublime. The word mistletoe comes from Anglo-Saxon, meaning dung ("mistel") twig ("tan" or "toe"). That's because most mistletoes, including the Christmas mistletoe, are spread by birds that eat the berries and then distribute them through their droppings or by wiping their beaks against the bark of the tree, resulting in the mistletoe seeds sticking to the tree, which then becomes a host.

https://cdn.britannica.com/00/180900-050-07F5DF44/mistletoe-European-Christmas-decoration.jpg

THE SCIENCE BEHIND MISTLETOE

In my quest for information about mistletoe, I came upon a humorous and highly informative article from 2016, written by former Concordia University of Edmonton professor, Dr. Cynthia Friedman, a scientist who studied mistletoe until her untimely death on December 24, 2018. I was enchanted by her prose and, thinking I couldn't do any better, decided to honour her work by quoting some of her more illuminating passages.

Dr. Friedman's article provides this description of mistletoe:

"In Europe, host trees of the Christmas mistletoe, *Viscum album*, are very often oak trees. Oak trees are deciduous (i.e., naturally lose their leaves in winter), but mistletoes are evergreen. Thus, in ye elden tymes, anyone stumbling across a mistletoe-bearing stand of oak trees in winter — perhaps even Christmas Eve — might be awestruck by the brilliant display of verdant plant life in an otherwise barren thicket. And indeed, such stumblers began to associate green mistletoe with Christmas, fertility, reproduction, and hence, well, the kissing. Not necessarily in that order…"

Dr. Friedman explains further that the mistletoe trees in Canada are dwarf varieties (smaller than Christmas mistletoe) and are "disease agents" in coniferous forests:

"The dwarf mistletoe alas is not content with just water and minerals; rather, it also obtains sugars from the host conifer tree. Remember photosynthesis from first-year biology? Yeah, the dwarf mistletoes do not do so much of that, preferring to rely on the host to do the work. Subsequently, the host conifers, including trees such as pines, spruces, and firs, tend to become frail and have shorter lifespans. That is right – dwarf mistletoes actually parasitize our Christmas trees!"

Finally, Dr. Friedman explains how dwarf mistletoes spread:

"However, "our" dwarf mistletoes are not normally spread by birds. Instead, hydrostatic pressure builds up within the fruit, leading to the explosive discharge of the single seed, which can have an initial velocity of over 90 km/hr and can travel as far as 20 m in order to ideally (for the parasite) land on another host conifer. This ballistic discharge is a remarkable process."

So mistletoe is actually a parasite that grows on and into other plants, typically trees, which they treat as "hosts."

Not so romantic when you think about it, and just a little too close to our current reality if you ask me!

https://concordia.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/xmistletoe-8-225x300.jpg.pagespeed.ic.dQ1GOWgt_e.jpg

Sources

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- https://www.britannica.com/plant/mistletoe
- https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/mistletoe

Gardening QUIZ

At the OHS Annual General Meeting typically held in December each year, a horticultural quiz is provided for members to work on together at their tables over the pot-luck dinner. With our AGM going online this year, we are providing a gardening quiz for you to do at home instead. Thank-you to Nancy McDonald for creating the quiz!

1. The juice from what common spring bloomer discourages silverfish from attacking books and was used historically to make glue?

2. The largest flower in the world, 10 feet high and 3 feet wide, is produced by what plant?

3. Roses are related to apples, raspberries, cherries, peaches, plums, nectarines, pears and almonds. T or F

4. _____ is an old English name, derived from the belief that foxes slipped their feet into the leaves of the plant to sneak up on prey.

5. There are more microorganisms in 1 Tsp. of soil than there are people on the earth. T or F

6. The common name for Torenia, a shade loving annual is _____.

7. Which fruit is from the bromeliad family? Indeed, it is the only edible member of the bromeliad family.

8. From where did Poinsettias originate ?

9. Rhubarb is a vegetable. T or F

10. Which fruit bears on average 200 seeds on the outside?

11. What flower resembles a dragon?

12. Peanuts are legumes. T or F

13. What is the fruit of a rose called?

14. What flower bulb was used in place of onions during WW2 in Holland?

15. Is broccoli part of the Cabbage, Lettuce or Leek family?

Anagrams

16. Herbal We Row (2 words)

17. Edges Nils

18. Heed Groans (2 words)

19. A Sugar Sap

20. Tailor Curl Hut

GARDENING QUIZ ANSWERS....DON'T PEEK!

Seriously...stop peeking. 1. English Bluebells (Hyacinthoides non-scripta) 2. Titan arums 3. T 4. Foxglove 5. T 6. Wishbone flower 7. Pineapple 8. Mexico 9. T 10. Strawberry 11. Snap Dragon 12. T 13. Hip 14. Tulip 15. Cabbage 16. Wheel barrow 17. Seedlings 18. Garden Hoses 19. Asparagus 20. Horticultural

EUPHORBIA
Emergency!

by Tuula Talvila

One afternoon in August I received a somewhat frantic phone call from my sister in Toronto. She was having a nasty reaction to something: her eyes were red and streaming and her vision was fuzzy; her nose and mouth were inflamed; she had small round blisters on her hand. A day or two earlier when it had started, she thought it was a reaction to something she had eaten but now she was beginning to think it was from a plant. She recalled doing some "drive-by weeding," as she calls it, where she grabs a few weeds as she's outside doing other things in her yard. She had been passing by the garden between her front path and the garage and pulled out some overgrown and sprawling succulents.

When she sent me a photo of the potentially offending plants, I was pretty sure they were a Euphorbia of some type. A Google search found the closest thing to her picture: *Euphorbia myrsinites* or donkey-tail spurge, a popular rock garden plant. The spurge family, Euphorbiaceae, is a very large group of plants that includes such diverse members as poinsettia, crown of thorns, cushion spurge, and many others ranging from annuals to long-lived trees.

Photo caption: The culprit, *Euphorbia myrsinites* (photo by Anneli LeGault)

Common to all, though, is a poisonous, milky-white sap. Because my sister wasn't wearing gardening gloves when she yanked out a few plants, she likely unwittingly got some sap on her hands and spread it to her face before she had a chance to wash her hands.

She kept me abreast of her symptoms and they were quite worrying. The pain in her eyes was quite severe and lasted several days, along with redness and teariness. She did manage to visit an ophthamologist (brother of a close friend; her own eye doctor had been completely unhelpful) who reassured her with news that her eyes appeared to be undamaged. He prescribed cold compresses and anti-inflammatories. Her blurred vision, which lasted for ten days, and the long duration of the other symptoms was very unnerving given that *Euphorbia* sap has been known to cause permanent damage and even blindness from intense infection of the cornea (Eke *et al,* 2000). Most damage occurs in the first day or two and outcomes are generally better when treatment is immediate.

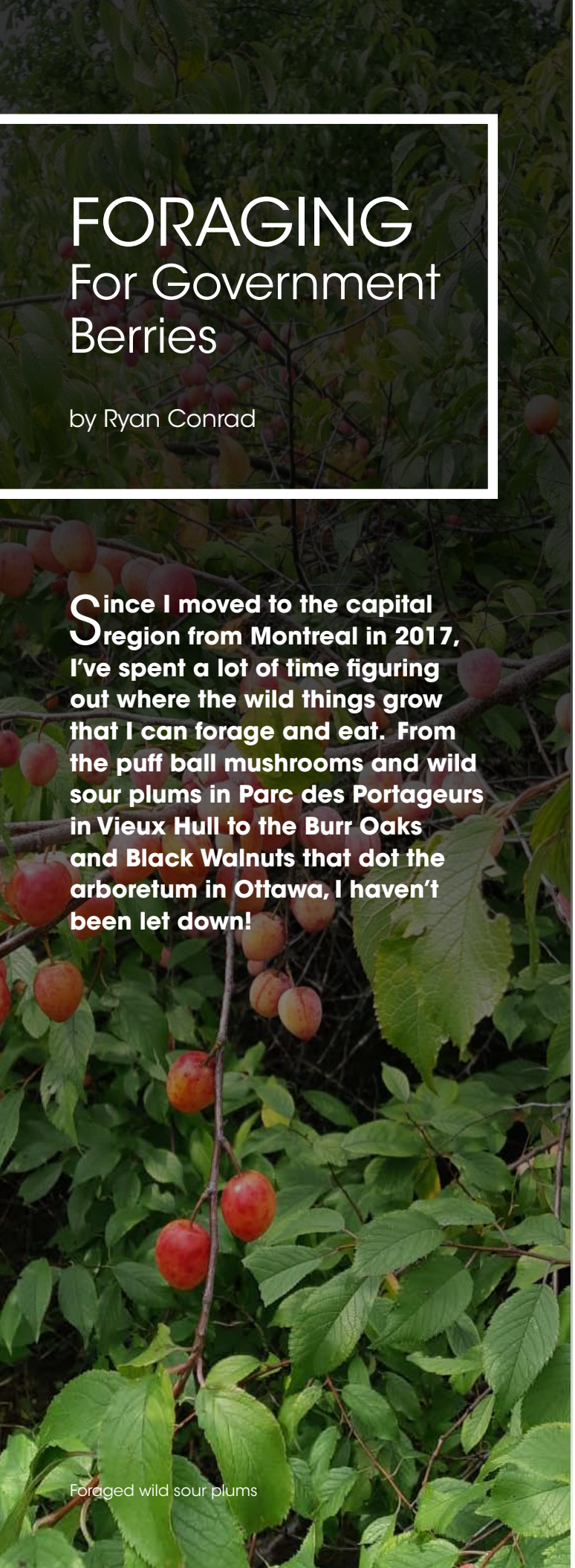
All of the websites I looked at about donkey-tail spurge extol its virtues as an easy-to-grow, sun-loving groundcover plant. The poisonous sap is also mentioned but is not highlighted particularly. I wonder if nursery tags warn buyers about its dangerous sap. I hope so! After witnessing my sister's frightening and potentially life-altering reaction, I strongly recommend handling this plant with a great amount of caution. If you have to grow it, be safe and wear your gloves!

REFERENCE:

• Eke T, Al-Husainy S, Raynor MK. The Spectrum of Ocular Inflammation Caused by Euphorbia Plant Sap. *Arch Ophthalmol.* 2000;118(1):13–16. doi:10.1001/archopht.118.1.13
• (https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamaophthalmology/fullarticle/412728)

FORAGING
For Government Berries

by Ryan Conrad



Since I moved to the capital region from Montreal in 2017, I've spent a lot of time figuring out where the wild things grow that I can forage and eat. From the puff ball mushrooms and wild sour plums in Parc des Portageurs in Vieux Hull to the Burr Oaks and Black Walnuts that dot the arboretum in Ottawa, I haven't been let down!

Foraged wild sour plums

This year's fall finds are the Aronia and Black Elderberry bushes growing conspicuously along the waterfront bike trail behind parliament. Both are native deciduous shrubs that enjoy wet woodlands and often grow at the edges of farm fields or riparian zones between wetlands and field or forest. These tough, disease-resistant shrubs also come with high-antioxidant dark purple berries that birds love, so you often have to beat them to it when the berries ripen in the early fall.

While Elderberries *(Sambucus canadensis)* are known by many for their health-promoting properties and are often sold in dried or syrup form at pharmacies and grocery stores alike, Aronia berries *(Aronia melanocarpa)* are much less well known. Indeed, they are even missing from my trusted *Edible and Medicinal Plants of Canada* field guide! That is despite the fact that Aronia berries contain 58% more antioxidants than blueberries and 90% more than cranberries, the other so-called "superfruits." And while both elderberry and Aronia berry contain high levels of fibre, Vitamin A, and Vitamin C, Aronia berries are also a great source of potassium, iron, zinc, and magnesium. Commonly referred to as "chokeberries" because of their astringent taste when eaten raw, people seem to have largely avoided Aronia berries save indigenous peoples who have long utilized them as both food and medicine. Stumbling upon these shrubs with bountiful drupes of dark purple berries behind parliament made me curious to try them out. So this fall I picked two and a half liters, leaving plenty for the birds, while commuter cyclists zoomed by and bewildered pedestrians shuffled by without making eye contact. Something I love about the capital region is that there are so few urban foragers, which meant less competition for what turned out to be delicious berries.

Once home, I rinsed the berries and decided I would freeze some and turn two liters' worth

Aronia Berry Jam RECIPE

2 Liters Aronia berries
3 Cups sugar
2 Apples
1 stick of cinnamon
Pinch of allspice, crushed clove, and/or nutmeg (optional)

1. Place cored and chopped apples and Aronia berries in a large pot with a little bit of water and bring to a boil. As the pot warms, mash the fruit with a potato masher or fork.

2. Once all the fruit is soft and mashed, add spices and sugar and keep at a gentle boil for about ten minutes.

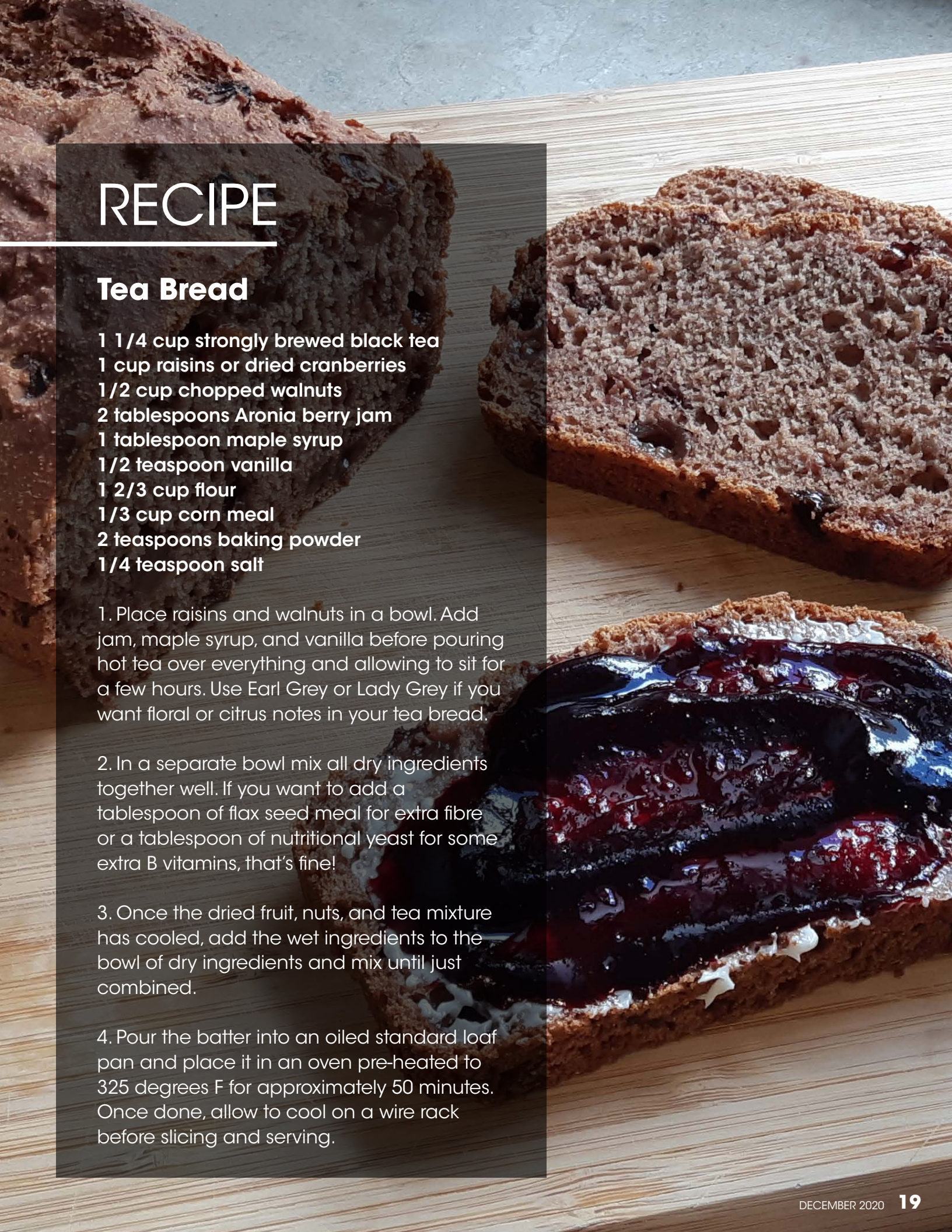
3. Take the mixture off heat and let it cool a bit before putting it through a high-powered blender. ***Don't forget to remove the cinnamon stick!***

Pour into jam jars and enjoy!

into jam. Thankfully, Aronia berries are quite popular in Eastern Europe and there was a plethora of recipes online and instructional YouTube videos posted by Polish and Ukrainian aunties to consult as I made my first batch of Aronia berry jam. After cooking down my berries with a few apples for natural pectin, I added sugar and cinnamon. After ten minutes at a gentle boil, I transferred my concoction to a Blendtec mixer to ensure everything was finely pureed (don't forget to remove the cinnamon stick). I ended up with just under two liters of an enticing deep purple jam that I was keen to try right away, but I waited patiently until the next morning when the jam cooled and thickened a bit more. The thickness of the jam was rustic and just right—not as thick as commercial jams with added pectin, but firmer than applesauce and perfectly spreadable.

Since then I've been using Aronia berry jam on pancakes, mixed in with sliced apples for a beautifully coloured pie (not unlike cranberry apple pie), and in place of marmalade in my favourite tea bread recipe. I still haven't decided what to do with my leftover frozen Aronia berries, but I'm glad to have them for a sour berry surprise come February when fresh fruit in supermarkets is either very expensive or tasteless—often both! Now that I know these berries are delicious once processed, despite their derisive chokeberry name, I plan to add some Aronia berry shrubs to my own back yard for future harvests. Then I won't have to live off government berries anymore!

Foraged burr oak acorns from the Arboretum in Ottawa



RECIPE

Tea Bread

1 1/4 cup strongly brewed black tea
1 cup raisins or dried cranberries
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
2 tablespoons Aronia berry jam
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 2/3 cup flour
1/3 cup corn meal
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt

1. Place raisins and walnuts in a bowl. Add jam, maple syrup, and vanilla before pouring hot tea over everything and allowing to sit for a few hours. Use Earl Grey or Lady Grey if you want floral or citrus notes in your tea bread.

2. In a separate bowl mix all dry ingredients together well. If you want to add a tablespoon of flax seed meal for extra fibre or a tablespoon of nutritional yeast for some extra B vitamins, that's fine!

3. Once the dried fruit, nuts, and tea mixture has cooled, add the wet ingredients to the bowl of dry ingredients and mix until just combined.

4. Pour the batter into an oiled standard loaf pan and place it in an oven pre-heated to 325 degrees F for approximately 50 minutes. Once done, allow to cool on a wire rack before slicing and serving.

THE JUNGLE IN MY BASEMENT:
Growing *Passiflora* in Ottawa

by Graeme Boocock, PhD

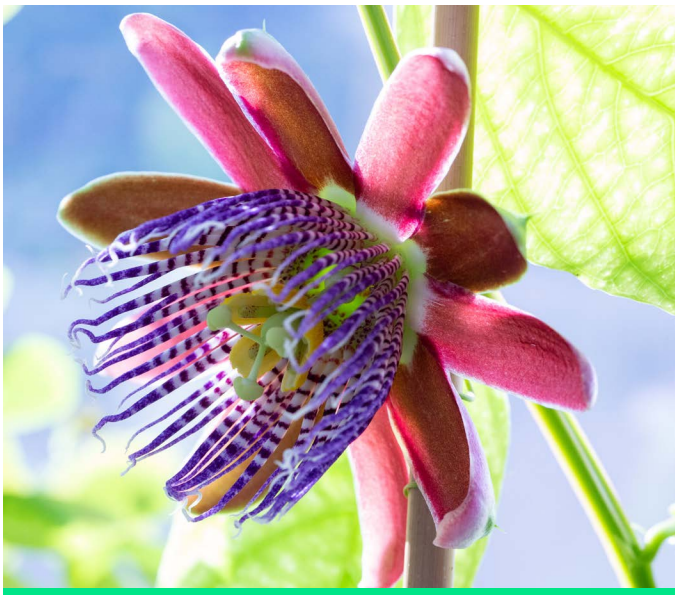
Interest in plants spans a spectrum. There are those who have the ability to coax symphonies of blooms from their gardens over the course of the growing season, and then there are those whose interest in plants is much less artful: the plant nerds. I am firmly in the latter category: a terrible gardener, but a keen collector.

P. 'Glacier'

So it is that I find myself, mid-October, once again hauling about 80 large tropical vines (and many smaller ones besides) into my house, hoping that my wife will not notice the ant colony that may have inadvertently come along for the ride.

I have a hazy memory — from a trip to England when I was six — of seeing a common blue passionflower (*Passiflora caerulea*) blooming on a mantelpiece. This was something the likes of which I had not seen before, and the memory would form the basis of my present-day hobby. The plants seem to have a habit of making strong impressions, including on 17th century missionaries, who saw religious significance related to the crucifixion (most notably the crown of thorns) in the structure of the flowers. The genus was named *Passiflora* in commemoration of this.

Today, there are about 600 described species of *Passiflora*, 574 of which are native to the Americas. Most of these are tropical vines, though a small number grow in tree form. Although there are fewer than ten



P. alata

cultivars of passionflowers that I find regularly commercially available in Canada, there are many more that will thrive outdoors in Ottawa during the summer. As outdoor potted plants, many *Passiflora* cultivars are undemanding plants that will happily grow up bamboo canes and flower profusely when placed in a sunny position. Although the plants do not like to be overwatered, a free-draining growth medium with sand and perlite additives renders this a non-issue in our climate. In the height of summer, my large established plants are watered every day, and are fertilized every week or two with a rose-type fertilizer.

Paradoxically, because our winter climate in Ottawa is so inhospitable, I am not constrained by practicalities that growers in other parts of the world may face. Every plant ultimately *must* be lugged inside for the winter, meaning that I grow plants that are hardy garden varieties in Europe alongside more tender ones, without worrying about what will survive in an unheated greenhouse.

One of the delights of growing *Passiflora* is the challenge of plant hybridization. Once again because of climate, I sometimes have cultivars blooming together that may not otherwise be grown together. Being at a horticultural crossroads between Europe and America can also help. For example, one of my first hybrids, *P.* 'Pole Star' was a cross between a hybrid bred in Texas (*P.* 'Iridescence') and a hybrid from Cremona, Italy (*P.* 'Odette'). Another, tentatively named *P.* 'Glacier', is derived from another Italian hybrid (*P.* 'Fata Confetto') and an unnamed hybrid from Florida. An as-yet unnamed hybrid derives from a cross of the native North American passionflower (*P. incarnata*) and a species from Brazil (*P. racemosa* 'Buzios'). The offspring of these crosses can be highly variable, and it is down to the breeder to select those plants with exciting characteristics, which may be worth naming and distributing.

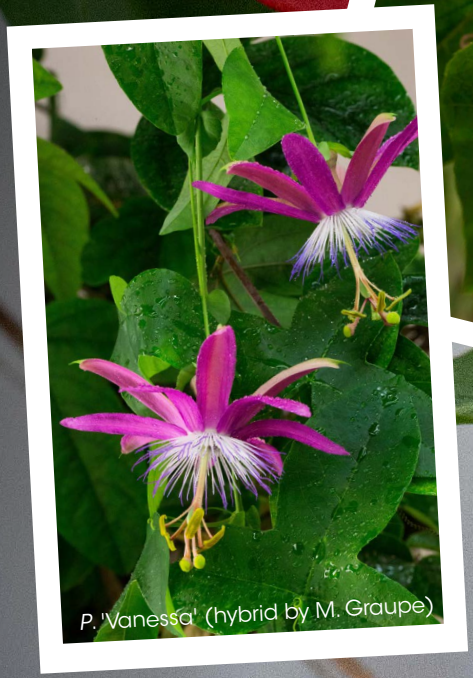
P. 'Pole Star'

My plants are inside for the winter now, in the furnace room, growing under fluorescent and LED lights. I have a small humidifier hooked up, and a hose attached to an old tap for a washer. The cement floor and the drain next to the hot water tank make watering a breeze. The furnace maintenance man has been and gone, and we have once again explained that what he has seen is *not* an illegal grow-op!

Fruit from the summer is ripening and dropping daily, and the thought of germinating the seeds to see what I will get helps to sustain me through the long Ottawa winter.


Unnamed Hybrid


P. pectinata (from the Turks and Caicos)


P. 'Vanessa' (hybrid by M. Graupe)

P. racemosa 'Buzios' (from Brazil)

BOOK REVIEW

RHS Botanical Illustration: The Gold Medal Winners

by Charlotte Brooks 2019

Review by Deborah Watt

255 pages

Available in the Ottawa Public Library

Charlotte Brooks is the Art Curator at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Lindley Library in London, England where she has worked with the botanical art collection for over 15 years. She is also Secretary to the RHS Botanical Art Judging Panel and has known many of the RHS gold medal winners.

The book opens with a lengthy essay on the history of the Lindley Library that holds the collections of the Royal Horticultural Society. The author deals particularly with the history of the botanical art collection. In the early 1800s, the Society commissioned illustrations by respected scientists and artists. The renowned artist Sir William S. Hooker was one such contributor and Sir Joseph Banks supported the Society in the collection and illustration of specimens. The early work of other notable collectors and illustrators also receives attention. Paintings representative of this period are presented in the introduction. In the mid-1990s, a decision was taken to establish a collection of contemporary botanical art and this led to the acquisition of works by gold medal winners at RHS shows to form part of the permanent collection of the Lindley Library.

PHOTO: http://theworldofkitsch.com/worldofkitsch/2019/6/6/rhs-botanical-illustration-the-gold-medal-winners-a-tome-for-those-with-a-passion-for-art-the-gardening-world-or-both-combined

Profiles of sixty artists and their works have been included in this book.

PHOTO: http://theworldofkitsch.com/worldofkitsch/2019/6/6/rhs-botanical-illustration-the-gold-medal-winners-a-tome-for-those-with-a-passion-for-art-the-gardening-world-or-both-combined

The entry for each artist begins with their RHS medal history, followed usually by a short biographical sketch. I found the most interesting entries to be those in which the artist described the sourcing of plant material and the process of creating the illustration. In many instances, the artist sought plant specimens from a particular breeder or garden. The complete composition may have been painted over a period of months or more than a year so that all stages of the plant growth from seed to flower to fruit could be accurately rendered.

Botanical illustration should accurately depict a plant and its distinguishing features in a true and lifelike representation that will allow botanists to identify the plant in the field. The work of the sixty artists featured in this book all conform to these requirements through a range of styles, media and subject matter.

My favourites among the winners include three studies for paintings in watercolour of *Lilium regale* by multiple medal winner Coral Guest. These include a painting of the plant in flower and two colour studies – one of the flower and one of the bulb, roots and bulblets, each with several small patches of mixed paints showing the effort the artist made to match the colours. Each patch of colour is carefully annotated and the reader gets a sense of the painstaking effort to create such a painting. The artist paid especially close attention to accurately rendering the creamy white of the flower petals against the white paper.

There is a remarkable painting by Annie Hughes who also painted the book's cover illustration of citrus fruit that is shown on the previous page. It is of a flowering, spiny cactus called *Astrophytum ornatum*, which has rays of tiny white dots beginning at the base of each rib and terminating at the bottom of each spine. The viewer, on seeing the painting, would have no difficulty identifying another specimen elsewhere. The artist recounts that her original painting was rejected by the grower because the flocking or white dots were not in the right pattern indicative of the species. She had to start over.

While most of the illustrations included in this book are reproductions of watercolours, some of the gold medal winners work in other media and there is a wonderful drawing in graphite pencil over conté pastel and coloured pencil of three parasol mushrooms, *Macrolepiota procera*. Amidst all the watercolour paintings, this highly detailed, nearly monochromatic pencil drawing is outstanding for its beauty and simplicity. The artist, Ann Swan, was very pleased when her brother, a retired doctor of fungal genetics, remarked that she had captured the microscopic tubules of the mycelium well.

I wished that the introductory text had included a description of the RHS shows that include categories for botanical illustration.

It would have been interesting to learn about the screening process for entries and the significance of winning a gold medal, which is the criterion for publication of the work of an artist in this book. Much of this information is available online. A good starting point is:

https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/rhs-botanical-art-exhibitions.html.

Entering the botanical art category of the major RHS show is not for dilettantes. In fact, most medal winners are professional artists who teach botanical art, paint on commission, or earn their living some other way from botanical illustration. Artists must submit four samples of their work for consideration by a panel of judges. For people living in the UK these must be original works, but reproductions are permitted for submissions from abroad. The RHS shows attract many artists from abroad. In addition to submitting a portfolio of art, the artist must also propose a theme for the actual entry which comprises six large panels grouped around the theme. If the proposed entry is accepted by the judges, the artist has five years to complete and submit the work.

Anyone with an interest in botanical illustration will find something of value and beauty and interest in this book. There are many "how to" books on the market.

This is a book that shows what can be accomplished by talented and dedicated artists.

PHOTO: http://theworldofkitsch.com/worldofkitsch/2019/6/6/rhs-botanical-illustration-the-gold-medal-winners-a-tome-for-those-with-a-passion-for-art-the-gardening-world-or-both-combined

WHAT'S SO CLASSY ABOUT

Being 'Horticultural'?

by DJ Smith

Today when people think of joining a gardening group, they might choose either a horticultural society or a garden club. We just don't discriminate between the groups who flaunt being "horticultural" and those who stick to the good old common word of "garden". It seems the men (and they were all men) who founded the Ottawa Horticultural Society felt differently in 1892.

As late as the 1950s, some people might sneer at garden clubs as a collection of "women in fancy hats." On the other hand, one of our older members told me that she had known someone who thought the OHS was full of people spouting long Latin botanical names. Differences were being drawn, but on what basis? I would not have thought along class lines. Surely middle class garden club women in their hats were as "classy" as any horticultural member. Yet our first chronicler, Fred Pain, stressed social status when he looked back from the 1960s to the beginnings of the Society.

Pain wrote that when the Society was founded, we were not the only gardening game in town. There were many florists and even, he said, "gardeners clubs" but it was apparently not sufficient. He said that the founders wanted a society that would "add suitable dignity" to being a "home gardener." They were also coming at the idea of a horticultural society from a decidedly status-conscious Ottawa. He did not give a source or a reason for this belief but I note he had interviewed the last living representative of the founders, Sam Short.

Lieut.-Col. Wm. White, C.M.G.,
First Commanding Officer of the Regiment, and now Honorary Lieut.-Colonel.

19

In terms of reflecting the class divide in the city, Pain pointed out that in our earliest years the Society benefited from the close personal interest of a number of Governors General and their wives—especially Lord and Lady Minto: "Anybody who was anybody was a member of the horticultural society. No important function in the city but what included representatives

from the society." Pain went further, however, to point out the divide between the plain gardener and the horticulturist. The gardener did the heavy work of gardening, and did so from childhood. He was a labourer working with his hands. The horticulturist was educated and gave direction to gardeners. "Gardeners were not horticulturists and horticulturists not necessarily gardeners."

I had once thought the Society's aspirations to social leadership were based as much on illustrious birth as on knowledge. The photograph (on the previous page) of our first President, Lieutenant-Colonel William White OMG (1830-1912), certainly presents a man with built-in leadership qualities. It was he who chaired the meetings in autumn 1892 to organize the new Society. Eventually he served a total of four years as President (1893-1894 and 1910-1911). In this regimental photo he posed in his militia regalia with full mutton chops adorning his face. The OMG (Order of Companions of St. Michael and St. George) was awarded to him by the Crown on his retirement from the post of Deputy Postmaster General of Canada in 1897. This was in recognition of distinguished public service in the Empire. I had him pegged—I thought—but he turned out to be more interesting than the stereotype I had imagined.

Lieutenant-Colonel White's biography in the Who's Who of his time stated that he was born in England and attended a private school in London, joined the British Post Office and then, in 1854, resigned to join the independent postal service set up in Canada just three years earlier. He did well in Canada, to the point of being able to report in all the censuses that followed that he employed two or three servants in his home. I saw him as the Public School young man, educated in the classics, who worked in public positions to maintain British standards throughout the Empire while perhaps relieving the family of one too many younger sons.

Then, in birth records and the British census, I discovered his family. His parents had been servants—upper servants, yes, but still servants. His father had been a butler at the time of young William's birth while William's widowed mother was listed in the 1851 census as housekeeper on a country estate. I was unable to track any records from the private school his biography said he had attended but I did learn that the school curriculum had been focused on commercial subjects and militia training—not the classics. Finally, he had joined the British Post Office when he was sixteen, likely as an "office boy" working under the office clerks.

I realized his story was more like many of those who, for example, served in the East India Company. He was an upper working class young man with a clerical education hoping to improve his situation. He was not going to be just another Bob Cratchit, slaving away at a small salary in London to feed a large family. And so he seized the opportunity to work in the Canadian postal system with the potential for advancement in a brand new organization. He immigrated in 1854 with his bride and his widowed mother but also, I imagine, with ambitious dreams in his head.

One thing White did in Canada was join the militia, first in Toronto, then in Quebec City and finally in Ottawa. This would have brought him into contact with people who could put him a little ahead socially. Not knowing anything about him, we cannot know if this was done cynically but I am willing to give him the benefit on this. For one thing, joining the militia followed naturally from his English schooling.

At the same time, he seemed to have been a genuine lover of a good garden. With regard to

White's gardening qualifications, Pain said he had a large garden backing onto the Rideau River at his home at 185 Wurtemburg. Pain does not say what happened to the garden beyond saying that Prime Minister Robert Borden later owned the house and then it became home to "foreign ambassadors." Today there is no 185 Wurtemburg. Several city lots seem to have been absorbed into a building complex which is the Turkish Embassy. I had hoped, given that embassies sometimes have fancy garden parties, that remnants of the garden might still exist between the buildings and the river. I fantasized about a boat ride on the Rideau to see if anything could be seen from that viewpoint but reality kicked in. Instead, I looked at the Google satellite view and all I saw behind the embassy were trees. It is likely another grand garden gone but I believe one that must have been genuinely loved by its maker, Lieutenant-Colonel White, for him to have given time to the brand new Ottawa Horticultural Society.

Addendum on Sources - We know most of what we know about the Society's early years from the history notes written by Fred Pain. He was a former President (1951-1952), Director, Yearbook Editor, and Honorary Life Member. He worked in his last years on a history of the Society. He read old newspapers in the days before a search on newspapers.com would make the job faster and easier on the eyes. Most importantly, he interviewed older members. What he wrote was more a chronology than a history but it is an important resource for understanding where the OHS came from, how far we have changed and what we still hold from the past.

An Ingenious Solution

by Sheila Burvill

My sister-in-law, Marilyn, had a problem. She'd grown a particularly lovely Caladium into a somewhat dense plant and now she wanted to split it and use the divisions to create more beautiful plants. It wasn't particularly difficult to separate out single component plants from the mass but when she potted them up, the stalks curved right over and would not remain upright. What to do?

Yes, of course she tried using the usual garden twine lightly tied around the stalks and then lashed to sticks but the stems of the Caladium are pretty tender and the twine pretty rough so there was a danger of abrasion on the stalk. Moreover, the twine doesn't have much give, if any, so as the divisions grow and thicken up, would the twine start damaging the spreading plants that would still need some upright support?

Marilyn has longish hair and she often keeps it secured behind her neck and one day when she was pulling her hair back, inspiration struck. Wouldn't those hair gizmos that she used to secure her hair work equally well in corralling the Caladium divisions? They are elastic and softly cushioned, strong enough to support yet able to expand when needed.

Here's how it all worked out:

Pretty nifty, eh? Note that she ended up with a grid support similar to what we use for peonies.

Photo credit – Marilyn Jones

PHONE APP REVIEW

PictureThis

by Maureen Mark

I have been hesitant to download more apps on my phone or tablet — in particular plant ID apps. There are so many that I haven't wanted to take the time to review them. And I admit that I have been spoiled by access to OHS members who know their stuff. In particular, I am grateful to Marilyn Light for helping me identify a number of woodland plants in the spring. Here are a few plants observed at Mer Bleue.

Maianthemum canadense (false lily of the valley or Canada mayflower) — Marilyn identified this one for me last year, so I knew what it was when I saw it this spring.

This orchid was new to me and I emailed Marilyn right away as there were others on the trail who were interested in its name. The photo was taken June 29. It is *Pogonia ophioglossoides* (rose pogonia or snakemouth orchid).

If you want to see it, the rose pogonia blooms a little later than this pink lady's slipper, which was seen on June 15.

In September, I was walking with my brother-in-law and his wife, both teachers, at Island Lake in Caledon. He knows everything. Really. I asked about a shrub with berries whose name I had forgotten. He couldn't remember (he knows everything, but can't remember it all at a drop of the hat). So his wife whipped out her phone and identified it as common buckthorn. He highly recommended the PictureThis app and, as he is a science teacher, I downloaded it. It is free! (More detailed information is available with a subscription of $39.99/year.)

I installed the free version on my phone. I will occasionally identify plants on the trail as I walk along, or I use it to identify the plants in photos that I have taken. You will need to activate your camera as it takes a photo and then goes through its library to identify it. Not only does it identify the plant with its botanical name, it also lists all the common names, provides a variety of photos, and mounds of information. You have access to frequently asked questions about the plant, a full written description, characteristics (plant type, life span, bloom time, size), scientific classification, growing conditions, and plant care.

The first test of the app was this mushroom that I saw at Island Lake in Caledon on September 21. It is in the family Gomphidiaceae.

There was not a lot of information on it, so perhaps the app is not as rich in the fungi area. FAQs provided include: What is Gomphidiaceae? Is Gomphidiaceae glutinous? Where does Gomphidiaceae grow? When does Gomphidiaceae grow?

On September 23, I went on a bird watching outing at Mud Lake and took a lot of photos including plants. So this was a great time to test out PictureThis, as I am unfamiliar with a lot of wild flowers that bloom in the fall. When I downloaded all the pictures, I used PictureThis to identify or double check my identification of plants.

I saw lots of this plant. PictureThis identifies it as common viper's bugloss, *Echium vulgare*, and also known as viper's bugloss, blue thistle, blueweed, and blue-devil.

There is a warning flag on the plant in the app:
Common viper's bugloss is a beautiful flowering plant, commonly cultivated as a garden ornamental. However, this plant is also toxic and listed as an environmental weed in many countries.

You can drill down in the app for more information on its status as a weed, its toxicity, its impact on the environment, and how to control it.

The description provided:
Common viper's bugloss is a member of the borage family and attracts honeybees. Once established, this pretty blue wildflower is easy to grow. However, it can become invasive. This species has a deep taproot which makes it difficult to transplant and difficult to eradicate.

Riverbank grapes, *Vitis riparia,* are also know as frost grapes. This is a woody vine that is native to North America. PictureThis provides 'Tips from Garden Coaches.'

ON THIS PLANT, IT SAYS:

Although an extremely beautiful and useful plant to have in any type of garden, riverbank grape requires quite a specific level of care and protection, especially in colder regions.

I have made many trips to Strathcona Park to observe the birds. This shrub caught my eye on October 1st as I couldn't recall seeing it bloom. It is red osier dogwood, *Cornus sericea*, also known as red twig dogwood, creek dogwood, red willow, and red-rood.

THE PictureThis DESCRIPTION SAYS:

Red osier dogwood is a thicket-forming shrub with attractive dark red winter stems that is a plant native to North America. This plant produces yellow flowers in early summer and fruit late in the fall. Over ninety-eight species of birds rely on this plant for food and take shelter in its branches.

More information on pests and diseases require a subscription. But the free app does say issues include honey fungus, phytophthora.

Then I went back to some older photos. I checked out these fungi that I saw on May 16.

Definitely not a lot of information on fungi. This is *Trichaptum*. The description makes me wonder about the writer:

Trichaptum biforme *is a bland, boring polypore, reminiscent of any number of faded, ubiquitous, Turkey-Tail-ish species. If you were an ant, however, you might have occasion to crawl underneath this fungus and bask in its beauty; the fresh pore surface is a gorgeous lilac purple.*

Then I remembered seeing a gorgeous tree blooming in the spring in the Glebe. The owner didn't know what it was and expressed interest in identifying it. I can now go back and knock on his door and tell him it is a Chinese flowering apple, *Malus spectabilis*. I should go back and see if it has fruits.

The app says:
Asiatic apple is a species of crabapple tree that is cold hardy and tolerant of many growth conditions. It blooms from April to May and its fruit ripens from August to September. The small apple-like fruit has a sweet and sour flavor. This tree has been a favorite in China for many centuries. This species grows best in full sunlight and moist, well-drained soil. Pests and diseases identified include thrips, spider mites, lace bugs, aphids, stem rot, rust disease, circospora blight, apple scab, black rot and codling moths.

The Care Guide says:
Water: average water needs, watering should be done each week or when the top 3 cm of soil has dried out. Water thoroughly until the soil is saturated and excess water is fully drained from the drain hole.

Pruning: *Trim the plant once before germination, and trim it once before flowering.*
Harvest time: *summer, autumn*
Propagation: *sowing, division, grafting*

Note that it is not possible to prune before germination. I advise looking at other sources to corroborate care instructions.

Then a test of a plant in my garden, which it identified correctly as *Primula veris*, blooming May 16.

Don't expect more detailed identification than the basic species name. This double bloodroot is simply identified as *Sanguinaria canadensis*.

But pictures need to be clear to allow for identification by the app.

This *Epimedium rubrum* was identified as *Clerodendrum trichotomum*. A close-up of the leaves suggested chocolate vine. A close-up of the blooms suggested European spindletree.

This better picture of Epimedium 'Pink Champagne' was identified as *Epimedium sagittum.*

And then there is the inexplicable. This fernleaf peony, *Paeonia tenuifolia,* was identified as Japanese quince, giant coreopsis, or woodland horsetail. But the app does allow you to input a correct identification.

Despite the limitations, I am going to really enjoy next Spring's rambles with this app in hand. I have also downloaded Picture Insect and Picture Bird.

Update: *When I drafted this article in September the app was free. Now you can get a free 7-day trial, after which the cost is $39.99/year. I will have to think about whether I want to continue using it or explore other apps.*

ARMCHAIR TRAVELLER

BERMUDA STORY & FLORA

by Katja Gillmore

Two years ago, October 26th 2018, I had an opportunity to work in a far away country, one that is approximately 21 square miles in size, long and narrow. A piano teacher was urgently needed at the Bermuda School of Music. It was an opportunity that I could not turn down.

I had two weeks to pack my bags and board a plane - I was ready for an adventure! I found out the country is made up of 181 islands and islets, 21 miles long and 1.75 miles wide at its widest. It also has the largest concentration of caves, with 150.

Getting around is tricky, as the roads are narrow with no shoulders or sidewalks (except for downtown Hamilton), and are often edged with stone walls. They are the perfect size for bikes (motorcycles and mopeds). The roads really are not pedestrian friendly. The cars needed to wait for a clearing if they wanted to pass me when I would walk to the ferry for work. I also travelled by bus but frequency was limited. I eventually bought myself a bicycle (they call it a push-bike). Moving to a new location after Christmas made my walks to the ferry longer and more dangerous. There are many steep hills: I worked on a hill and lived on a hill, called Burnt House Hill, so I did get my exercise while I was there! I always looked forward to Saturday mornings when I would buy my veggies from a local farmer who parked across from the school. I was happy to support the locals.

All the tropical plants I had studied at school were here on the island; in Canada we would call these house plants. I was excited to explore the island to find different landscapes and try to identify the species. The island of course has the coastal areas with native and endemic plants and trees, for example the Bermuda Cedar, Bay Grape, Oleander, and Morning Glory to name a few. There are areas that are more like jungles - the woodlands - filled with Bermuda Palmetto, Bermuda Maidenhair fern, Elephant Ears, and the invasive Asparagus fern and Chinese Fan Palm. The Mangroves are unique, as they are the

most northerly in the world. They are important for controlling shore erosion, and many species of birds and fish live in these areas. Beaches are incredibly beautiful with the crystal-clear turquoise water and pink sand, especially on the south shore. The coral reefs are close enough to the shore to swim to; with a snorkel and fins, you will see lots of beautiful fish swimming around the rocks and coral. Upon arrival, I was in awe of the colour of the water - I fell in love instantly. I learnt I was never far from the ocean, always within walking distance.

Bermuda Island's Flora

Bermuda is sub-tropical and is not one of the Caribbean Islands as many mistakenly think, confusing Bermuda with Bahamas or Barbados. Bermuda does have a cool season, our winter, when it dips down to 16 degrees Celsius. This is when the Islanders dare not swim in the ocean for fear of the cold. As a Canadian, I could not wait to dive into the crystal-clear waters on the chance I found myself on a beach.

I hope you will get a taste for beautiful Bermuda with all its bright, colourful flora.

Main Photo: *Bougainvillea glabra spectablis.* 01 *Sisyrinchium bermudiana,* Bermuda's national flower, endemic. 02 Many colourful buildings just like the flowers.

Bermuda is covered with Hibiscus, often pruned into hedges with a machete! I was determined to get the stamens in focus but had great difficulty as the wind never stopped.

HIBISCUS

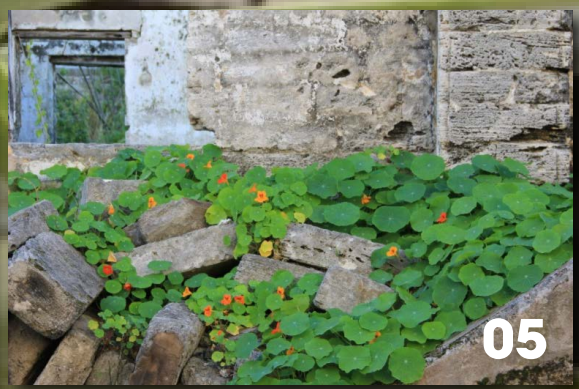
small flora

MAIN PHOTO: *Freesia refracta* "Wild Freesia" are seen in the lawns. 01 Ice Plant. 02 Poaceae "Purple Fountain Grass" and Prickly Pear. 03 Wild Poinsettia, "Joseph's Coat" . 04 Boxwood Beauty Natal Plum flowers (*Carissa macrocarpa* "Boxwood Beauty")

BIG FLORA

MAIN PHOTO: *Agave sisalana,* Sisal Plant in bloom. 01 *Strelitzia reginae* "Bird of Paradise". 02 *Ipomoea purpurea* "Wild Morning Glory" - We know this to be an annual; in Bermuda it grows freely all year round. (In amongst some *Nerium oleander,* Oleander). 03 *Lilium longiflorum,* "Easter Lily". 04 *Aloe arborescens* "Red Hot Poker"

DELICIOUS FLORA

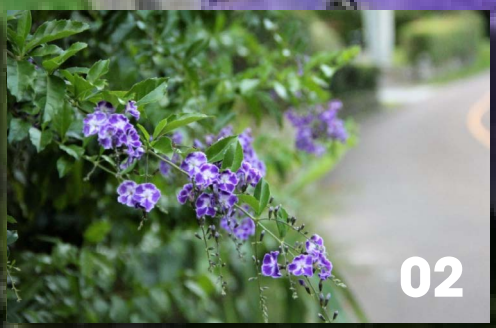


MAIN PHOTO: A neighbour friend grew this pineapple. People are very friendly and respectful in Bermuda. 01 Natal Plum, edible, sweet and juicy when ripe, red. 02 *Opuntia stricta* "Prickly Pear". 03 *Coccoloba uvifera*, "Bay Grape", edible. One day I gathered a few bowls full and made jam with it - very tasty! 04 *Agave americana* "Century Plant". 05 Wild Nasturtium

STREET ART

Narrow streets lined with hibiscus hedges, walls of bougainvillea flowers, cascading asparagus ferns and giant potato vines.


01


02


03


04


05

MAIN PHOTO: *Solanum wendlandii* "Giant Potato Vine" . 01 *Asparagus setaceus* "Asparagus Fern". 02 Sweet smelling *Duranta erecta* "Sky Flower" . 03/04 *Bougainvillea glabra spectablis* in fuschia pink. They grow everywhere, along roadside walls or gracing the foundation of homes. 05 Heath Fire Cracker, with a stunning orange-red display of colour.

SHRUBS & TREES

MAIN PHOTO: *Delonix regia,* "Poinciana" Tree. 01 Persian silk tree, *Albizia julibrissin* - the bees sure liked these flowers! 02 Frangipani trees are common and are seen in a variety of colours, and do have a lovely scent. 03 *Euphorbia pulcherrima* "Poinsettia".

FORCING BULBS

FILL YOUR WINTER HOME WITH THE COLOURS OF SPRING

by Lori Gandy

If ever there was a year when we're going to need a respite from the winter blues, this is it. With the early darkness, the chill, the coming cold and storms, not to mention a virus that apparently isn't going away any time soon – we deserve a little sparkle and cheer this winter.

Why not trick some spring bulbs into blooming in winter? Creating a splash of spring floral colour in your home is easy and doesn't require a lot of fancy materials, just a few things that gardeners usually have on hand.

You can force bulbs in any kind of container you have around your house or shed. The bulbs can be planted closer together than with outdoor plantings. You can also combine an assortment of bulbs with different bloom times in one container or plant with other plants to ensure a spectacular show of colour throughout the winter.

Check out the next page for how to plant the bulbs!

https://www.bhg.com/gardening/flowers/bulbs/forcing-spring-bulbs/

HOW TO: FORCE BULBS

01

PLANTING THE BULBS

Choose pots that are a good size and can accommodate several bulbs. Place a layer of pot shards on the bottom to ensure good drainage.

Place soil in the pots up to about a half inch from the rim and firm it down.

Press the bulbs into the soil; remember they can be close together and even touching each other. (A tip from Landscape Ontario: "Place tulip bulbs with their flat side toward the wall of the pot so leaves will grow on the outside and flowers on the inside of the planter").

Fill the pots with more soil to cover the bulbs. Water liberally.

02

CHILLING THE BULBS

Place the pots in a cool location (about 2-9 degrees Celsius) to give the bulbs their required cooling period. This is an important step – tricking the bulbs into thinking they have experienced winter. If your bulbs cool for too short a time, the flower stems will be too short; if they cool too long, the stems will be too long. The bulbs don't need light during this period because the roots develop first.

The Better Homes and Gardens website provides this useful information to determine how long to chill bulbs (see below). Note that paperwhites and amaryllis don't need to be chilled.

03

ENJOYING THE FLOWERS

After the cooling period, the pots can be brought into a warm room. Water thoroughly and wait for all that glorious colour and scent to transform your home and your spirits.

While it may be difficult to find spring-flowering bulbs now, if you happen to have some left over from your fall planting, try forcing them this winter. If amaryllis appeals to you, there are several available in stores, complete with pot and soil, ready to place in a sunny window so you can have a spectacular show of colour at Christmas. (See also the article on amaryllis on page 2.)

FYI

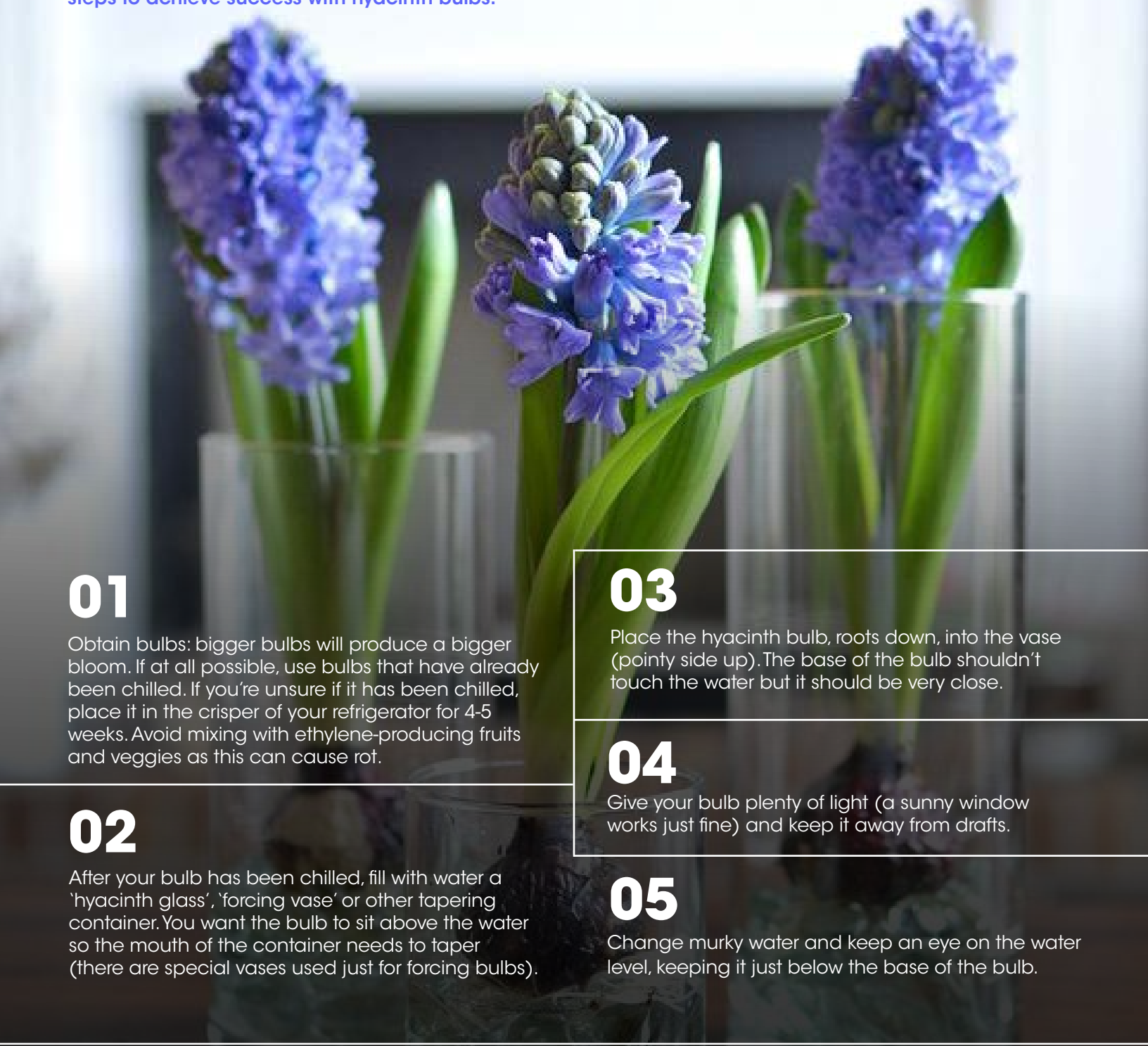
Bulb	Chill Time	Bloom time after chilling
Crocus	8-15 weeks	2-3 weeks
Daffodil	2-3 weeks	2-3 weeks
Grape hyacinth	8-15 weeks	2-3 weeks
Hyacinth	12-15 weeks	2-3 weeks
Iris	13-15 weeks	2-3 weeks
Snowdrop	15 weeks	2 weeks
Tulip	10-16 weeks	2-3 weeks
Paperwhite	None	3-5 weeks
Amaryllis	None	6-8 weeks

https://www.bhg.com/gardening/flowers/bulbs/forcing-spring-bulbs/

FORCING HYACINTH
BULBS IN GLASS VASES

Hyacinth are a superb choice for indoor forcing because not only are they vibrantly coloured, they produce an intoxicating scent that will fill your home with the essence of spring.

Mark Cullen (markcullen.com) offers the following steps to achieve success with hyacinth bulbs:



01
Obtain bulbs: bigger bulbs will produce a bigger bloom. If at all possible, use bulbs that have already been chilled. If you're unsure if it has been chilled, place it in the crisper of your refrigerator for 4-5 weeks. Avoid mixing with ethylene-producing fruits and veggies as this can cause rot.

02
After your bulb has been chilled, fill with water a 'hyacinth glass', 'forcing vase' or other tapering container. You want the bulb to sit above the water so the mouth of the container needs to taper (there are special vases used just for forcing bulbs).

03
Place the hyacinth bulb, roots down, into the vase (pointy side up). The base of the bulb shouldn't touch the water but it should be very close.

04
Give your bulb plenty of light (a sunny window works just fine) and keep it away from drafts.

05
Change murky water and keep an eye on the water level, keeping it just below the base of the bulb.

Sources
• https://landscapeontario.com/forcing-bulbs • https://www.gardeners.com/how-to/growing-bulbs-indoors/5158.html • http://markcullen.com/forcing-hyacinth/ • https://www.bhg.com/gardening/flowers/bulbs/forcing-spring-bulbs/ • https://www.finegardening.com/article/bulbs-and-houseplants-lifting-the-winter-blues

https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/604749056185264055/

The OHS **SHOWS CORNER**

A NOTE FOR EXHIBITORS & POTENTIAL NEW EXHIBITORS

It is said that 'necessity is the mother of invention.' In order not to miss out on a Show, the Shows Committee introduced a virtual version in which members were invited to photograph their best specimens either in containers or in situ and enter them in the relevant class. The Show schedule had to be much pared down and simplified and was posted on the website.

A number of members entered their best plants, blooms, and vegetables and every member was eligible to vote on their favourites. Points were given out to winners and all entries were eligible for plant bucks to spend on our sales later. Congratulations to everyone who participated and much praise goes to Maureen Mark who studied up on a new platform and came up with the product we used. Stay tuned for another virtual Show in 2021. We hope many more members will participate.

Any questions, contact:
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ABOUT US

This Newsletter is published by the Ottawa Horticultural Society (OHS) and is distributed to OHS members free of charge.

We depend on our members for ideas, articles and information about what is going on in the gardening community.

PLEASE SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS TO:
info@ottawahort.org

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