

Sechelt Garden Club Newsletter

www.secheltgardenclub.com

MARCH 2015

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Barbara Peters is stepping down from her position as Membership Chair. We thank her so very much for all the work she has done. Sharon O'Brien is our new Membership Chair. We welcome her and wish her all the best in this new role.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 30 at 7:30pm in the Seaside Centre

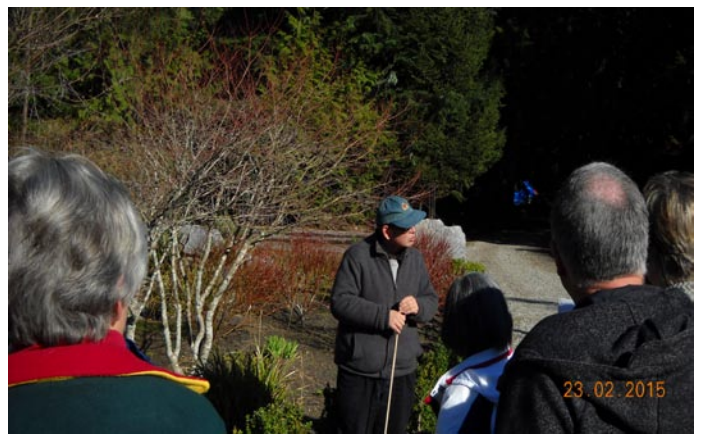
Ron Knight will talk about and teach "Pruning with Confidence." He'll be teaching us the general principles needed to prune any ornamental shrub, tree, or vine with confidence.

Note: On Tuesday, April 14 from 9 to 12, Ron will do a hands-on workshop in June Meyer's garden. For the first hour Ron will demonstrate pruning techniques on various types of plants.

We will then spend 2 hours moving around a garden circuit, practising on June's trees, shrubs, and vines. Coffee, goodies, and printed handouts will be provided. Please bring pen and clipboard, secateurs, pruning shears, loppers, and rainwear if necessary. **There are only 20 spaces available. You can sign up at the March meeting.**

Please wear your name tag, bring your coffee/tea cup and *don't* park at Gilligans.

Membership: We are still collecting membership dues for 2015—\$17 for individuals and \$25 for families. Please bring cheques made out to the *Sechelt Garden Club* to the check-in table at the meeting. If we have not received your membership dues by March 31, you will be taken off our list and no longer receive the newsletter and nursery discounts.



On February 23, our speaker Conway Lum did a workshop in Ardath Hoole's Garden. Notice the rapt attention he commanded.

Seedy Saturday

Saturday March 28th, 2015, from 11 am to 4 pm at Roberts Creek Community Hall. A great day of seeds, workshops, food, community and more from the *One Straw Society* in partnership with the the *Sunshine Coast Seed Collective* www.sunseeds.ca

MARCH Gardening 'TO DO' List

(thanks to Bob Tuckey from *The Natural Gardener*)

- Prune winter flowering shrubs and vines after blooming
- Plant summer and fall blooming bulbs
- Spray for peach leaf curl, peach leaf blight and canker
- Dormant spray fruit trees and roses if you haven't already done so
- Plant ground covers
- Plant or repair lawns
- Plant grasses
- Plant roses
- Plant fruit trees
- Plant perennials
- Plant shrubs, trees and vines
- Plant warm season vegetables
- Start your tomatoes indoors
- Continue any clean up that may have been interrupted by cold weather
- Start feeding your houseplants with an organic fertilizer
- Start feeding your trees, shrubs, perennials and vines with an organic fertilizer
- Look for interesting and unusual plants for your garden

POTTING-UP for the May PLANT SALE

Potting-Up will take place at Ardath Hoole's house. Please **save the following dates** so that you won't miss out on the Potting-Up activities.

- Tuesday, March 24th from 10 to 1
- Wednesday, March 25 from 1 to 4
- Thursday, April 30 (if necessary) from 10 to 3)
- **Please park on the road** and not in the driveway. Drop-ins are welcome. Bring your gardening gloves, trowel and plants from your garden.
- **Bring plants with you to the Potting-Up** or drop them off if you can't stay. Remember to label the plants. If you are bringing ground cover (or potting it up at home) please plant large clumps. Remember, the plants you bring don't have to be from your garden. Plants from neighbours and friends are also welcome.
- **Pot-Up at Home** using at least 1 gallon pots. No tiny pots, please. We want to have big, healthy plants in May so make sure you fill up your pot with soil. Shredded paper or any other fill sinks during the winter. Please label your plants in **HB pencil** and indicate the colours, how tall they grow, if they need sun or shade and if they are drought tolerant. Cut-up venetian blinds are the best for labelling. Ask Christie for some if you need them.
- **If you have 2 gallon or bigger pots to donate**, please bring them to Ardath's. If you are dropping them off, please phone first.
- **If you need potting-up soil mix** bring a bucket to Ardath Hoole's and fill it up. The soil will be delivered.



Tips from the Garden Shed

Getting Your Garden Beds Ready for Planting.

by Catherine Abbott

Good soil preparation is key to having a successful vegetable garden. Even if you have the ideal soil that is fertile, well drained, and has good air circulation your garden beds will need some attention. This month is a great time to get started.

Vegetables need nutrients to grow well, which they pull up from the soil therefore amending your garden beds regularly is necessary for healthy plants. The three most common nutrients veggies plants need are Nitrogen for leaf growth, Phosphorus for root growth, and Potassium for healthy stems. The plants use these nutrients depleting them; they can also be leached by rain or eroded by wind so it is important to add them back into your garden soil every year.

The pH of your soil is another thing you want to check. This usually does not change drastically from year to year so knowing what the pH of your soil is will indicate what if anything needs to be added to raise or lower it each year. Most vegetable plants grow best between 6.2 and 6.9 pH. If the pH is lower than 5.5 you will want to add lime to raise the pH, if it is above 7.5 you will want to add sulfur to lower it.

Steps to follow to get your garden beds ready for planting:

- **Remove any grass.**

This is done if you are starting a new garden site from an existing grassy area. If you have an existing garden area start with step 2.

- **Plow, spade or rototill the area.**

Make sure the soil is ready to work, if it is too wet or too dry you will harm the soil structure. To test the soil take a handful and squeeze it. If it stays in a ball it is too wet. If it is powdery or has hard clumps it is too dry. If it crumbles freely it is just right. Another sign is if you are turning the soil with a spade and the soil sticks to the end of the tool it is too wet to work. If the soil is too wet wait a week and do your test again.

- **Break down any large clumps.**

Clumps may be left after you rototill, so break these up with a hand cultivator or garden fork.

- **Apply manure or compost.**

Dig well-rotted manure or compost into the top few inches of soil with a hand cultivator or rake.

- **Add in organic fertilizers.**

Taking the time each year to add in organic fertilizers such as alfalfa or blood meal for nitrogen, bone meal for phosphorus, and greensand or wood ash for potassium will help give the vegetable plants the nutrients they need to grow well. A good rule of thumb would be to add an average of 2.5 pounds of each fertilizer per 100 square feet of garden space. You can also use an all purpose organic garden fertilizer instead of the individual soil fertilizers.

- **Add in lime or sulfur.**

If you have really acidic soil (pH below 5.5) add lime to the areas where you will be growing any veggies other than root crops especially potatoes. If the pH is above 7 you can add in sulfur to lower the pH. It is best to lime a few weeks after you have added manure or compost to your garden soil. Use 6 lbs per 100 sq feet if clayey soil, 4 lbs per 100 sq feet if loamy soil, 2 lbs per 100 sq feet if sandy soil.

- **Rake the bed.**

This is done to make the bed smooth and level. Pick out any large debris or small stones. You want the soil to be the consistency of coarse breadcrumbs, especially if you are planting vegetables with fine seeds.

Once your soil preparation is complete, your next step in planting a vegetable garden is selecting and planting your seeds.