

# Sechelt Garden Club Newsletter

www.secheltgardenclub.com

SEPTEMBER 2012

<i>President:</i>	<i>Charmaine Harris</i>
<i>Past President:</i>	<i>June Meyer</i>
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<i>Treasurer:</i>	<i>Lorraine Blakeman</i>
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<i>Membership:</i>	<i>Mary Rowles</i>
<i>Speakers :</i>	<i>Sandra Markley</i>
<i>Tours:</i>	<i>Moira Leishman</i>
<i>Directors at large:</i>	<i>Christi Blackman, Carol Steedman</i>

**Next Meeting: Monday, September 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm in the Seaside Centre**

Bill Terry will be talking about *The Lizard of Oz*, and other Stories of Plant Hunting in Southeast Australia. He will be bringing copies of his new book to sell: *Beyond Beauty: Hunting the Wild Blue Poppy*. Bill Terry's presentations are 'don't miss' experiences.

**Reminder: please wear your name tag and bring your coffee/tea cup to the meeting!**

**Rental of Equipment:** For information about our rental policy and fees for our slide projector and digital Power Point projector, contact Sandra Markley.

## Potting Up

As we begin a new year in the Sechelt Garden Club, our thoughts and efforts turn towards the Plant Sale—our major fund raiser in May. In order for us to offer the quantity, variety and quality of plants that the public has become used to, we need to divide and pot-up the plants in our gardens in September/October and then again in the spring. I've reprinted the 10 Tips on Dividing Perennial Plants as a guide and refresher. This gives us a lot of leeway to try out new methods and to learn from our mistakes and to ask questions. I like to think that the motto of the Sechelt Garden Club is "Nobody's Perfect."

**Please contribute to the Plant Sale in the following ways:**

### SEPTEMBER MEETING:

1. Divide and pot up at least one plant in your garden and bring it to the meeting for the Plant Sale.
2. Prepare a label with the plant colour and common name. If you know the Latin name, also include it. e.g. Bee Balm (Monarda) red. Please do not give us orange daylilies or purple bearded irises.
3. Write out questions that might have arisen while you were potting up and bring them to the meeting. Remember: If you have a question it's more than likely that others do too. This is how education works.

### POTTING-UP WORKSHOPS

Please plan to attend one or both of the autumn **Potting Up Workshops** offered by Moira Leishman. The first one is on Wednesday, October 17 from 10 am to 12. The second one is Thursday, October 18 from 1 to 4 pm. Everyone is welcome—experienced potter uppers and beginners—it's lots of fun. For more information contact Moira.

**"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need."**

**Marus Tullius Cicero**

## September Gardening 'TO DO' List

Set out transplants of cool-weather vegetables.

- Prune cane fruits such as raspberries and blackberries (except everbearing raspberries).
- Plant winter pansies and fall annuals (calendula, dianthus, ornamental cabbage and kale).
- Divide peonies. Be sure to have 3-5 eyes per division. Plant with eyes no deeper than 2" below soil.
- Plant fall-blooming bulbs.
- Divide bearded iris and perennials and plant new ones.
- Plant bare root trees and shrubs.
- Plant herbs and ground covers as the weather cools.
- Save seed pods of flowers that you would like to propagate.
- Take cuttings of bedding plants like geraniums, fuchsias and heliotrope. Do the same with shrubs and bush fruits, too.
- Prune summer flowering heathers, and give hedges a final trim.
- Pull up tomato plants by the end of the month and ripen indoors any unripened tomatoes.
- Sow winter vegetables (lettuce, swiss chard and kale).
- Order new fruit trees and bushes and prepare soil by digging in compost and manure.
- Remove yellow leaves from water plants. Remove, clean and store water pump.
- Plant rye grass as a cover crop for your vegetable garden to restore nitrogen to the soil.

(Thanks to June Meyer, and to Bob Tuckey from *The Natural Gardener*)



## DATES TO REMEMBER

**Sunday, September 23:** 1.00 to 3:00 Sunshine Coast Botanical Gardens: *Buzz About Bees!* Join beekeeper Martin Cook for an afternoon session about bees. Learn about traditional beekeeping; how hives work and what a year in the life of a colony looks like. Gate 4 (Main Gate) 5941 Mason Road (By donation).

**Sunday, October 14:** UBC Apple Festival. Watch for the email

**Sunday, December 16:** Sechelt Garden Club Christmas Luncheon.

**"May I a small house and large garden have;  
And a few friends,  
And many books, both true."  
Abraham Cowley**

**"Flowers always make people better, happier,  
and more helpful; they are sunshine,  
food and medicine for the soul."  
Luther Burbank**



## Tips From the Garden Shed

### 10 Tips on Dividing Perennial Plants *Divide to make healthier plants--and more of them*

by Janet Macunovich author of *Designing Your Gardens and Landscapes* and *Caring for Perennials*.

#### 1. Divide when a plant looks good

Don't wait until a plant has become decrepit or monstrous to divide it. When it looks its best, divide it at the end of that year. Watch for these early signs of trouble: when the center of the plant has smaller leaves, fewer flowers, and weaker blooming stalks than the outer edges or when the plant runs out of growing room on its edges and has nowhere to go but into neighboring plants.

#### 2. Start at the drip line

To lift a perennial with minimal root damage, begin digging at its drip line. The roots will generally extend that far, so digging there lets you lift the plant with most of its roots intact. Dig a trench around the clump, cleanly severing any roots, then cut at an angle down and under the clump from various points around the outer edge until you can lever the plant out of the hole. For large, heavy plants, you may have to first dig the trench, then slice straight down through the center of the plant as if it was a pie, halving or quartering the clump before undercutting and lifting it.

In early spring, divide while the new growth is still low to the ground, so the handling of stems is not usually an issue. In summer, tie stems together before lifting the plant to avoid damaging them during the digging. In fall, cut plants back before digging them for division.

#### 3. Divide in cool weather

Perennials can be divided at any time of the year if you give the plant appropriate care afterward. However the best time is when the soil is warmer than the air for at least part of every 24-hour period. That's just before peak daffodil season in spring and right after the nights become cool in the fall. These conditions will allow the roots of the division to grow while the tops stay low, out of the sun and wind. Dividing in the fall gives plants more time to set new roots before growing up into the heat.

#### 4. Keep roots cool and moist

Put them into a bucket or box in a cool shaded place, such as a garage, and cover them with newspaper to retard moisture loss. Sprinkle water to dampen the newspaper if the roots seem to be drying during their "hold" time. If, despite your best efforts, the divisions dry out while on hold, soak them in a bucket of water for about an hour before replanting.

#### 5. Replenish soil with organic matter

If you remove a wheelbarrow full of perennials, then put a wheelbarrow full of compost back into that site before replanting to renew the soil, stay ahead of pest problems, and maintain fertility. Without additions, the plants will not have the advantage of renewed, fertile soil and the bed will settle after planting, putting the plants at a disadvantage in terms of drainage and air circulation.

#### 6. Use vigorous sections first

After dividing, replant pieces that are, at most, 20 to 25 percent of the original clump. Smaller sections grow more vigorously and tend to produce stronger, longer-lasting blooms. Dividing a hosta, for example, into pieces with about seven growing points will yield the best results. Perennials multiply exponentially—one stem is likely to triple or quadruple itself each year. So if all you do is halve an overgrown clump this year, it will more than double in a season and need dividing again the next year.

#### 7. Take extra care when a plant's in bloom

Plants in bloom may not be capable of growing as many new roots as quickly as nonblooming plants. However, given more attentive watering or shade at midday and plants in bloom will do well.

## 8. Keep only the healthiest pieces

If you wait until a perennial is declining, has a dead center, or has succumbed to pest problems because it has become crowded and weak, be sure to replant only the healthiest pieces. Usually these are the outside sections. Watch for discolored stems and eroded crowns and roots.

## 9. Spread out your divisions

Place a division into a hole that is at least as wide as its roots when spread out. Don't turn a root tip up rather than down or curl it back around on itself to fit it into an undersize hole because you'll defeat the plant's natural regrowth mechanisms.

Root tip growth is regulated in part by chemicals flowing down from the tips of leafy stems to the roots. As in all flows, gravity is involved, so if you plant a root tip up when it was down, the normal flow is interrupted. At least temporarily, that root tip will not grow as vigorously as it could.

Replant divisions in a wide hole and over a wide area. Spread out the roots wide and down over a mound of soil. In the next growing season, the top of the plant will be as wide as the roots are at the time of planting. Ensure that when you spread out the roots they don't overlap and compete with the other divisions.

## 10. Let the roots be your guide

When you dig up a perennial, you will see that it fits into one of five basic root types: roots that form clumps or offsets, surface roots, underground running roots, taproots, or woody roots. How you proceed depends on what root type your plant has.

**Offsets:** To divide a plant whose roots form offsets (small plants growing at the base of a larger one), snap the connection between any of the sections to obtain a piece with ample roots and three or more growing points (or "eyes"). Some denser clumps may have to be cut apart.

Plants that form offsets include asters (*Aster* spp.), coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*), hostas (*Hosta* spp.), tickseeds (*Coreopsis* spp.).

**Surface roots:** Some perennials have roots that run on or just below the surface of the soil. They form new crowns and roots when they reach open spaces or make contact with the soil. If you cut between any of the stems as you would cut a piece of sod from a lawn, you will have a division with its own stems and roots.

Plants with surface roots include bee balms (*Monarda* spp.), black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia* spp.), creeping sedums (*Sedum* spp.), creeping speedwells (*Veronica* spp.).

**Taproots:** Plants that have taproots can be divided by using a sharp knife to slice down the length of the root. Every piece that has at least one eye, some of the taproot, and a few side roots is a viable division.

Plants that have taproots include balloon flowers (*Platycodon grandiflorus*), butterfly weeds (*Asclepias tuberosa*), cushion spurge (*Euphorbia polychroma*), Oriental poppies (*Papaver orientale*).

**Underground running roots:** Underground running roots can develop suckers as they grow beyond the shade of the mother clump. These suckers can be cut away from the main plant, or you can dig up the main plant and cut away any piece with an eye or sucker already forming.

Plants with underground running roots include hardy geraniums (*Geranium* spp.), Japanese anemones (*Anemone x hybrida*), ostrich fern (*Matteuccia pennsylvanica*), plume poppies (*Macleaya* spp.).

**Woody roots:** Woody perennials often form roots when stems rest on the ground or are buried by gradually accumulating mulch. Make a new plant by simply cutting between the rooted stem and the mother plant.

Plants that have woody roots include candytufts (*Iberis* spp.), euonymus (*Euonymus* spp.), lavenders (*Lavandula* spp.), sages (*Salvia* spp.)

**When you divide your perennials make sure  
that you save some for the plant sale!**