Sechelt Garden Club Newsletter

www.secheltgardenclub.com

APRIL 2014

President:	***Anita Paulin***
Vice President:	***Joanne Sheanh***
Past President:	***Mardie Campbell***
Secretary:	***Edwin Leung***
Treasurer:	***Lorraine Gallant***
Newsletter:	***Sandra Friedman***
Membership:	***Barbara Peters***
Speakers :	***Ardath Hoole***

Directors at large: Christi Blackman, Carol Steedman, Lorraine Blakeman
Webmaster: Lilli McGinn

Next Meeting: Monday, April 28 at 7:30pm in the Seaside Centre.

Allan Levinsohn will talk about:
Irrigation: planning, implementing and maintaining a water system in your garden.

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

MEMBERSHIP: People who have not paid their dues have been taken off the mailing and email lists. If they would like to be a part of the Sechelt Garden Club, they are wecome to rejoin.

March Potting Up

The Potting Up sessions were a lot of fun. Thank you to Christi Blackman for hosting the events. Thanks to Rae Anderson, Kathy Archibald, Phyllis Argyle, Lorraine Blakeman, Mardie Campbell, Elaine Clayden, Carol Corbet, Lorraine Gallant, Charmaine Harris, Ardath Hoole, Carla and Ron Knight, Shari Laine, Edwin and Pianka Leung, Anne Lempfert, Penny Lyle, June Meyer, Joan Milina, Sharon O'Brien, Kay Ogawa, Mary Rowles, Mary Anne Tiede, Joanne Sheanh, Tricia Smurthwaite, Carol Steedman, Pat Smit and Sue Stockall.

March Potting Up

April Potting Up

Thank you to Chris Wilson for your donation of jams.

You made $48 for the Garden Club!

Plant Sale

Thank you to everyone who signed up at the March meeting to work on the plant sale. Ardath Hoole and Sandy Friedman are in charge of volunteers and we will contact you before the sale.

We still need volunteers to: **Set Up**, **Clean Up**, **Carry the Plants** to and from the trucks, **Sell Plants** and **Pick up the Plants** from Christi's and from Charmaine's and return the left-overs after the sale. We strongly encourage new members to volunteer. It's lots of fun, easy to learn and a good way to meet your fellow garden club members. Please hit reply to contact Sandy or email Ardath Hoole t ardath_hoole@hotmail.com

Xeriscaping - At our March meeting speaker Gwen Steele, executive director and co-founder of the Okanagan Xeriscape Association, introduced us to xeriscaping. Their website was the database for the plants and information that she shared: www.okanaganxeriscape.org.

Photo from left to right: Ardath Hoole, Pat Smit, Gwen Steele.

Gardening 'TO DO' List

April 2014

- Divide up primroses and polyanthus after flowering.
- Stake perennials that need it and mulch perennials if not already done.
- Rose pruning should be completed by now. Mulch with manure, mushroom manure or well-rotted compost.
- Check your roses for aphids. Squish them or apply Safers Insecticidal Soap. Doing this now means relatively aphid free roses later
- Shear winter flowering heathers after flowering.
- Continue planting trees and shrubs.
- Check vines growing on the house to make sure they are not invading window frames or working their way under gutters and shingles.
- Divide summer blooming perennials such as hostas, daylilies and phlox. Remember to pot some up for the plant sale.
- Apply a mulch of compost, mushroom manure or steer manure to your garden beds.
- Plant or repair lawns
- Early April Plant early potatoes, green onion, bulb onion, kohlrabi, cabbage and leeks.
- Mid April sow beets, carrots, Swiss chard, broccoli, cauliflower, parsnip, kale and lettuce. (Note: Spring is late this year so you might want to wait until the middle of the month to start planting)
- Sow zucchini, cucumbers and tomatoes in a sunny window or cold frame.
- Plant new strawberry plants.

(From *The Twelve Month Gardener,* Stevens, Hungerford, Fancourt-Smith, Mitchell and Buffam

Coming Events:

Caron Garden Tour Wednesday, May 14, 2014 – 11:00 to 2:30. Includes a themed tour entitled “Giants and Dwarfs in Rhodoland”, lunch break on the deck, and a hands-on seminar by Ron in the garden classroom on “How to Root Rhododendron Cuttings”. To sign up email Anita Paulin

Caron Gardens Rhodo Festival. Saturday, May 17th - 10:00 to 3:00. 4622 Beaumont Road, Pender Harbour. More details and a map are at: www3.telus.net/rcknight (detailed email flyer will be sent out in May)

Tips From the Garden Shed...

The Poop on Manure

Manure is organic matter. Animal manure is the feces of animals—primarily of livestock like horses, cows, and chickens. It may be “pure,” but it often includes bedding or litter materials like straw or sawdust, in which case it will also contain animal urine. Depending on the source, manure is very high in organic matter as well as nutrients essential to plant growth. As animals digest the plants and other food they eat, they are broken down by anaerobic bacterial action in their stomachs. Manure is, in some ways, like compost that has been broken down at high speed by the animals that have produced it.

Farmers and gardeners have been using manure for centuries to add organic matter to their soil. Over time, as organic matter breaks down in soil, it becomes depleted. The mineral soil that is left over becomes less able to support abundant microbial life, so by “manuring” such a field, the farmer is able to integrate organic matter into the soil and re-start or feed that microbial life. The microorganisms and invertebrates that live in soil break down minerals and organic matter into forms that are accessible to plants. So if you have a healthy soil biomass, you can grow healthy crops without the use of chemicals.

How to use it

Rotted manure can be spread on the surface of the soil or tilled into the soil. Many organic growers prefer a “no-dig” method in which manure and other soil amendments are added to the soil in layers, always on the surface. This encourages sub-soil microbes and creatures like earthworms to feed on the material at the surface, and drag it down into the sub-soil. Tilling works, too, but may be disruptive to sub-soil life. Because the texture of rotted manure is relatively fluffy, compared to soil minerals, most of it is going to remain near the surface, even when tilled. Remember that it is possible to over-apply organic matter of any kind. Soil wants to maintain an ideal balance (loam) of soil particles (sand, silt, and clay) with organic matter. And while there are a few types of hardy plants that will thrive in pure manure, it’s more useful to think of manure as organic matter—as a general soil amendment to promote microbial action.

Types of manure

Animals digest their food in different ways. And different animals eat different sorts of food, so it’s no surprise that the end product will vary from creature to creature.

Chicken
All birds have relatively high metabolisms and body temperatures. One of the best qualities of chicken manure is that few, if any, weed seeds can survive passing through the gut of a chicken. The manure of all poultry (turkeys, pigeons…) is a combination of feces and urine, and it's extremely high in nitrogen. Fresh chicken manure is far too strong for direct application, so it should be fully composted. In small quantities, it makes a good additive to your compost pile, combining well with high carbon matter like lawn clippings and leaves. As a fertilizer, mature chicken manure has an NPK rating of 1/1.5/0.5.

Cow
This may be the most balanced of all manures for organic growing because of the nature of cows' stomachs. Cows can digest the cellulose that makes up so much of the bulk of the plants they eat, so their manure breaks down very easily. It also tends to be moist, which helps in the composting stage, and it's not strong in terms of nutrients. Composted steer manure typically has an NPK rating of 0.8/0.5/0.5.

Horse
Horse manure is abundantly available and well balanced. Horses digest their food less thoroughly than cows, so their manure is richer in organic matter. It is, however, more likely to contain viable weed seeds. Horse manure often contains bedding and straw soaked with nitrogen-rich urine, which is of particular value to growers. Expect an NPK rating of 0.5/0.3/0.4.

Sheep & Llama
These animals spend a great deal of time outdoors leaving their droppings in the field. But any that can be collected is very valuable as garden manure. Like cows, these animals digest their food well. Their potassium rich fertilizer has an NPK rating of 0.4/0.3/0.8.

Rabbit
Rabbit pellets are high in nitrogen and phosphorus. Some of the literature suggests that if the pellets are kept dry, they can be used fresh, simply scattered around plants like pelleted plant food. This should be done with some degree of caution, as the pellets can be soaked with ammonia-rich urine. In a food growing system, it's probably safer to compost rabbit pellets before use. Its NPK rating is 2/1.4/0.6.

Mushroom manure
This product can be purchased in bags, or is sometimes available in bulk amounts. It is the residual waste of the mushroom growing industry, and is usually comprised of a mix of straw, horse manure, dried blood, chalk, and other ingredients that have been thoroughly composted. If you can find organic mushroom manure, it's an outstanding soil amendment with an NPK of 0.7/0.3/0.3. Mushroom manure that is not specifically listed as organic may contain traces of pesticide residues used to control fungus gnats.

Green manure
Not all manure exits the gut of an animal, of course. Green manure is a general name for cover crops that are grown with the intent of tilling under. They may add carbon, or other nutrients to the soil, and improve structure and drainage. Legumes are planted to fix nitrogen in the soil through a symbiotic relationship with bacteria.

Slurry & Tea
In some larger farm systems, fresh dairy cow manure (and other types) is collected in concrete basins, and mixed with water to form "slurry," which is then machine spread on fields prior to tilling or planting. On a much smaller scale, compost and manure tea can be made for the home garden or small farm. This involves steeping organic matter in water, straining it, and using the resulting tea as a foliar or crop fertilizer. Because the decomposition of the organic matter is anaerobic, it can result in a seriously stinky final product. But it is cheap to produce, and very effective.

Try filling a bucket 1/3 full of aged manure (or ½ full of finished compost), and top it up with water and a tight fitting lid. Let this steep for about one week, and then strain the tea into another container. The tea should be diluted one part tea to two parts water before use.

(Adapted from **West Coast Seeds** newsletter).