The Winter Newsletter for the Antigonish & Lismore Garden Clubs

March, 2016

- Hopes for spring, bringing the outside in
- Dealing with Winter Damage
- Plantings for Birds, Bees & Butterflies
- News of coming events
- Please feel free to convey a topic you think would be of interest. sbryson@ns.sympatico.ca

Forcing Flowering Shrubs

We gardeners are always anxious for spring and the beauty it brings. We can sometimes advance that beauty by cutting budded branches of various flowering shrubs, bringing them indoors and hoping they ultimately flower.

The practice is quite simple.

Many ornamental trees and shrubs set their flower buds during the previous growing season. These buds must experience a period of dormancy before they will open. After six weeks of cold temperatures, buds will usually come out of dormancy after two to three weeks of being exposed to warmth and moisture.

Coincidentally, late winter is the best time to prune deciduous trees and large shrubs. Get a jump-start on pruning along with an early gift of spring color inside the house.

Prune on a mild winter day when the temperature is above freezing. Branches and buds are softer and more pliable and will be better able to make the transition from cold outdoor temperatures to warm indoor temperatures. Inspect the branches carefully when making your selections, looking for those with lots of plump flower buds. Flower buds are round and fat, whereas leaf buds are smaller and pointed.

Cut and gather the branches and bring them inside. Add floral preservative, according to the instructions on the package, to a bucket of warm (100° to 110°F) water and set it aside.

Forcing Flowering Shrubs

After bringing the branches inside, fill a sink with very warm water. Very warm water is important because it contains the least amount of oxygen. If oxygen gets into the stems it can block water from being taken up, thus preventing hydration. Hold the stems underwater and recut them at a severe angle an inch or two above the original cut. The stems will quickly absorb the water.

For larger branches, >1/2 inch diameter- split the end of the stem in half for a distance of about an inch to allow more of the interior of the stem to be available to take up water. Strip buds, twigs, and leaves from lower sections that will be under water. Immediately place the stems in the bucket of water. You can simply store all of the stems in this bucket of water and set it aside in a cool place and wait for opening buds. Alternately, you may arrange the branches to your liking and leave the arrangement in a warmer spot, but still away from direct sun or heat sources. A periodic misting helps. The time needed for buds to open is dependent upon the species and how near the time is to natural bloom time. Early bloomers will usually open more quickly than later ones. Change the water and add new preservative each week, or when you notice the water starting to discolor.

Blooms should last a week or more and stems with foliage last longer. By cutting several branches each week as winter turns to spring, you can have a continuous show of color during February, March and April.

Cutting stems on a sharp angle, preferably under water

Forcing Forsythia
Video

Forsythia is one of the easiest

Candidates for Forcing

Shrub	Species	~ Time (wks)	Description
Beauty Bush	*Kolkwitzia amabilis*	5	Small clusters of pink flowers on slender stems.
Bridal Wreath Spirea	*Spirea prunifolia*	2	Small, white flowers in sprays.
Cornelian Dogwood	*Cornus mas*	2	Dainty, yellow flowers in clusters.
Deutzia	*Deutzia gracilis*	5	White flowers.
February Daphne	Daphne mezureum	3	Fragrant, violet flowers, early
Flowering Almond*	*Prunus glandulosa*	3	Delicate, pink flowers.
Flowering Quince	*Chaenomeles sp.*	4	Long lasting, red or orange flowers.
Forsythia	*Forsythia hybrids*	2	Many yellow flowers.
Honeysuckle	*Lonicera sp.*	2	Fragrant, pink or white flowers.
Lilac	*Syringa sp.*	4	Fragrant, lilac, purple, or white flowers
Mockorange	*Philadelphus sp.*	4	Clusters of white, fragrant blooms.
Pussy Willow	*Salix sp.*	2	Fuzzy, white buds.
Redtwig Dogwood	*Cornus sp.*	5	White flowers with red stems.
Rhododendron*	*Rhododendron sp.*	4	Large clusters of blooms; wide variety of colors
Saskatoon, Indian Berry	*Amelanchier sp.*	2	Dainty, white flowers.
Witchhazel	*Hamamelis sp.*	2	Four yellow, strap-shaped petals.

Fixing Winter Damage

Plants respond differently to winter stress and each winter provides a different set of stressful conditions, plants possess a remarkable ability to withstand extremely severe winter conditions. That being said, there are still a great number of categories of potential harm to our garden plants

- **Cold damage (Dieback)**
- **Sun scald**
- **Root injury**
- **Frost heaving**
- **Salt damage**
- **Snow and ice damage**
- **Animal damage Rodents, Deer**
- **Winter discoloration of evergreens**

Cold damage (Dieback)

Plants which are marginally hardy will be the ones most likely to suffer from direct extreme cold and thus the associated dieback. Injury is more prevalent and more severe when low temperatures occur in early fall or late spring, when there is little or no snow cover during the winter or when low temperatures are of prolonged duration. Pronounced fluctuations in temperature can be extremely detrimental to plants throughout the fall, winter, or spring. Diagnosis of damage may need to wait until well into the spring. One does not want to prematurely prune back.

Sun scald: **It is interesting that both extreme cold and heat can cause damage. Young trees, newly planted trees, and thin-barked trees (cherry, crabapple, honey locust, linden, maple, mountain ash, plum) are most susceptible to sun scald. Sun scald is characterized by elongated, sunken, dried, or cracked areas of dead bark, usually on the south or southwest side of a tree. Warming followed by rapid temperature drops are usually responsible.**

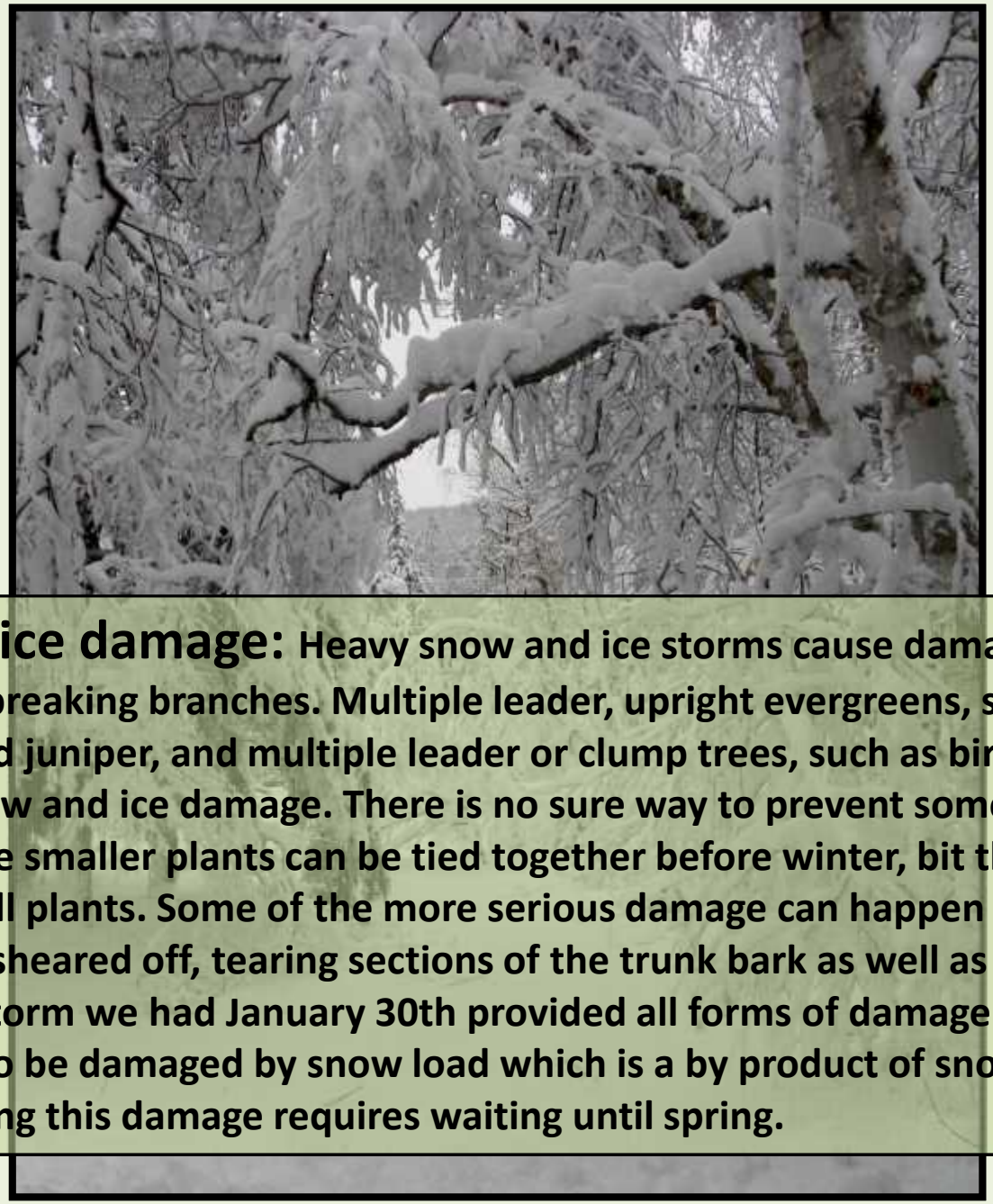
Sun scald may be prevented by wrapping the trunk with a commercial tree wrap, plastic tree guards, or any other light-colored material. There are pros and cons.

To repair sun scald damage, cut the dead bark back to live tissue with a sharp knife, following the general shape of the wound, rounding off any sharp corners to facilitate healing. Wrapping the trunk for a couple of years may prevent further damage.

Root injury can be more subtle than other types of injury. Ground temperatures will typically be warmer than air temperatures. Ground which is well hydrated will retain heat better than dry soils. Another reason to ensure plants are well watered before the onset of winter. This minimizes the degree of frost in the ground.
To encourage fall root growth and to reduce root injury, mulch new trees and shrubs with 6 to 8 inches of wood chips or straw.

Frost heaving is most likely to harm newly planted , young perennials.
Repeated freezing and thawing of soil will literally push the plant out of the ground.
A 4- to 6-inch layer of mulch will prevent heaving by maintaining more constant soil temperatures.

Salt damage: Salt runoff can injure roots and be absorbed by the plant, ultimately damaging the foliage. Salt spray from passing autos can also cause severe foliar or stem injury. Those exposed to severe onshore winds can have salt spray damage several times of year. Broad leaf evergreens are most susceptible. Avoiding salt use near plantings is about the only solution. Damage near highways may be unavoidable.



Snow and ice damage: **Heavy snow and ice storms cause damage by bending and breaking branches. Multiple leader, upright evergreens, such as arborvitae and juniper, and multiple leader or clump trees, such as birch, are most subject to snow and ice damage. There is no sure way to prevent some of this damage. Some smaller plants can be tied together before winter, bit this is not practical for all plants. Some of the more serious damage can happen when branches are sheared off, tearing sections of the trunk bark as well as breaking the branch. The storm we had January 30th provided all forms of damage.**

Plants can also be damaged by snow load which is a by product of snow clearing activities. Fixing this damage requires waiting until spring.

Animal damage: usually from rodents and deer

Mice, rabbits (rodents), and deer can all cause severe damage to plants in the winter. These animals feed on the tender twigs, bark, and foliage of landscape plants. They can girdle trees and shrubs and eat shrubs to the ground line. Voles can cause extensive root damage.

Trees can be protected from rodent damage by placing a cylinder of ¼-inch mesh hardware cloth around the trunk. The cylinder should extend 2 to 3 inches below the ground line for mice and 18 to 24 inches above the anticipated snow line for rabbit protection. Hardware cloth can be left on year-round, but it must be larger than the trunk to allow for growth. If you have many trees or shrubs to protect, using screens and wraps may be too expensive and time consuming.

Guns, baits, poisons and traps all have a negative side!

Deer are the bane of many gardeners. A high fence is usually the only deterrent. The presence of a dog sometimes works. Spray on deterrents seem to be rather trial and error in their efficacy. A horizontal barrier of elevated fencing wire can often deter a deer's approach to a plant. Animals seem to avoid stepping on something that will "trap" their feet.

Winter Damage from Grouse

If damage from deer, voles and mice is not bad enough; grouse will often decide to have a feast on azalea buds

Scars left where flower buds used to be

Winter damage - Evergreens

Minimize winter injury to evergreens. Assure proper placement of evergreens in the landscape. Yew, hemlock, rhododendrons and arborvitae should not be planted on south or southwest sides of buildings or in highly exposed (windy, sunny) places. Another way to reduce damage is to insert evergreen boughs against or over evergreens to protect them from wind and sun and to catch more snow for natural protection. One way to recycle your Christmas tree.

Keeping evergreens properly watered throughout the growing season and into the fall is another way to reduce winter injury.

Browning or bleaching of evergreen foliage during winter occurs for four reasons:

1. Winter sun and wind cause excessive transpiration (foliage water loss) while the roots are in frozen soil and unable to replace lost water. This results in desiccation and browning of the plant tissue.

2. Bright sunny days during the winter also cause warming of the tissue above ambient temperature which in turn initiates cellular activity. Then, when the sun is quickly shaded, foliage temperature drops to injurious levels and the foliage is injured or killed.

3. During bright, cold winter days, chlorophyll in the foliage is destroyed and is not resynthesized when temperatures are below 28°F. This results in a bleaching of the foliage.

4. Cold temperatures early in the fall before plants have hardened off or late spring after new growth has occurred can result in injury or death of this non-acclimated tissue

Winter damage can be mostly cosmetic or can entirely kill the plant. Some plants can regenerate foliage from existing buds, others will lose the entire branch. Fixing the damage often needs to wait until the plant resumes spring growth.

Winter injury can often be prevented by constructing a barrier of burlap or similar material on the south, southwest, and windward sides of evergreens.
Total wrapping of a plant is usually not necessary

If a plant has exhibited injury on all sides, surround it with a barrier, but leave the top open to allow for some air and light penetration.

Attracting Birds, Bees & Butterflies

Whether permanent residents or just passing through, birds not only bring beauty, colour and sound to the garden, but also clean up pesky insects, slugs and snails. Most non-urban garden will have a variety of features that are welcoming to many bird species.

We can try to provide the basics of life.

PROVIDE FOOD

Most birds have a mixed diet of seeds, berries, insects and grubs, so think smorgasbord and supply a variety of food from season to season. Bird feeders likely come to mind first and there are many different types, but better yet, put in a mix of trees and shrubs, both evergreen and deciduous, that provide fruit and seeds as well as nesting sites and shelter.

Nectar-rich flowers, such as hardy geraniums, campanulas and salvias, attract insects, favoured by many birds. And tubular flowers, especially red ones, will draw hummingbirds. Don't forget ground-feeding birds: Lawns (not treated with chemicals) and leaf litter offer food for foragers, such as doves, towhees and juncos. Finally, don't clean up too thoroughly in fall: Leave seed heads on ornamental grasses and perennials, such as echinacea and rudbeckia, for the winter.

PROVIDE WATER

Water, for both drinking and bathing, is as crucial to birds as food. Birdbaths are available in all sorts of materials, including concrete, ceramic, resin and stone (avoid metal).

Whatever the type, it should be no deeper than six centimetres, kept clean and accessible and sited far enough away from shrubs where predators can lurk.

Small streams and ponds with shallow edges are also popular.

PROVIDE LODGING

If food and water are readily available, birds will look for sheltered sites for nesting and roosting. Trees, shrubs and hedges, particularly conifers, fit the bill for many. Thorny plants, such as holly, firethorn and barberry, discourage predators, while evergreens give year-round protection for overwintering residents. Should you have a dead tree, leave it standing if you can – it will become a prized condo for cavity nesting birds, such as woodpeckers. And, of course, there are purchased birdhouses and nest/ roost boxes, though some are more decorative than functional.

Birds have specific preferences as far as shape, size and aperture go, so make sure to get the right houses for your particular birds, and mount them at the correct height. In fall, collect pruned and fallen branches and create a brush pile, which will offer winter protection to birds, though other critters, such as bunnies and snakes, will like it, too.

10 PLANTS THAT BIRDS LOVE

1. Serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp. and cvs.)
2. Dogwood (especially *Cornus florida, other species)*
3. Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata* and cvs.)
4. Crabapple (*Malus* cvs.)
5. Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia* and cvs.)
6. Spruce (*Picea* spp. and cvs.)
7. Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*)
8. Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina* and cvs.)
9. American elder (*Sambucus canadensis* and cvs.)
10. Viburnum (*Viburnum* spp. and cvs.)

How to attract butterflies to your garden

Attracting both birds and butterflies presents a paradox: some of the former will dine happily on some of the latter, both adult and larvae. If your garden attracts butterflies, it will also attract birds. Like birds, butterflies have certain habitat preferences. Butterflies cannot fly in wind or rain; they prefer sunny and windless or gently breezy weather. A woodpile or brush pile gives them a place to hide and rest. Overwintering species, such as mourning cloaks, may hibernate in these shelters while other species fly south for the winter.

How to feed butterflies in your garden

Not all butterflies sip flower nectar -- some prefer sap or rotten fruit -- but those that do are particular. Weeds rate high in all areas: vetches attract silvery blues, nettles bring in tortoiseshells and red admirals, and milkweeds attract monarchs. The subtle flowers of grasses attract many northern butterflies. Some plants attract several species. Herbs in bloom are butterfly candy. Catmint (*Nepeta x faessenii*), an easy perennial ,is a favourite.

A few examples of Butterfly friendly plants

Plant/shrub/tree	Butterfly	Province
aster	northern pearl crescent	all
butterfly bush (*Buddleia*)	tiger swallowtail	all
butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)	monarch	all
coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)	fritillary	all
hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*)	painted lady	all
lantana (*Lantana camara*)	swallowtail sp.	planters
nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)	spring azure	all
New England aster (*A. novae-angliae*)	checkered skipper	all
violet (*Viola species*)	fritillary	all
willow	mourning cloak	all

Black Swallowtail

Nepeta faessinii


Asclepias var. ‘Cinderella’
Perhaps plant some Milkweed (Asclepias species)to make Monarch butterflies feel at home

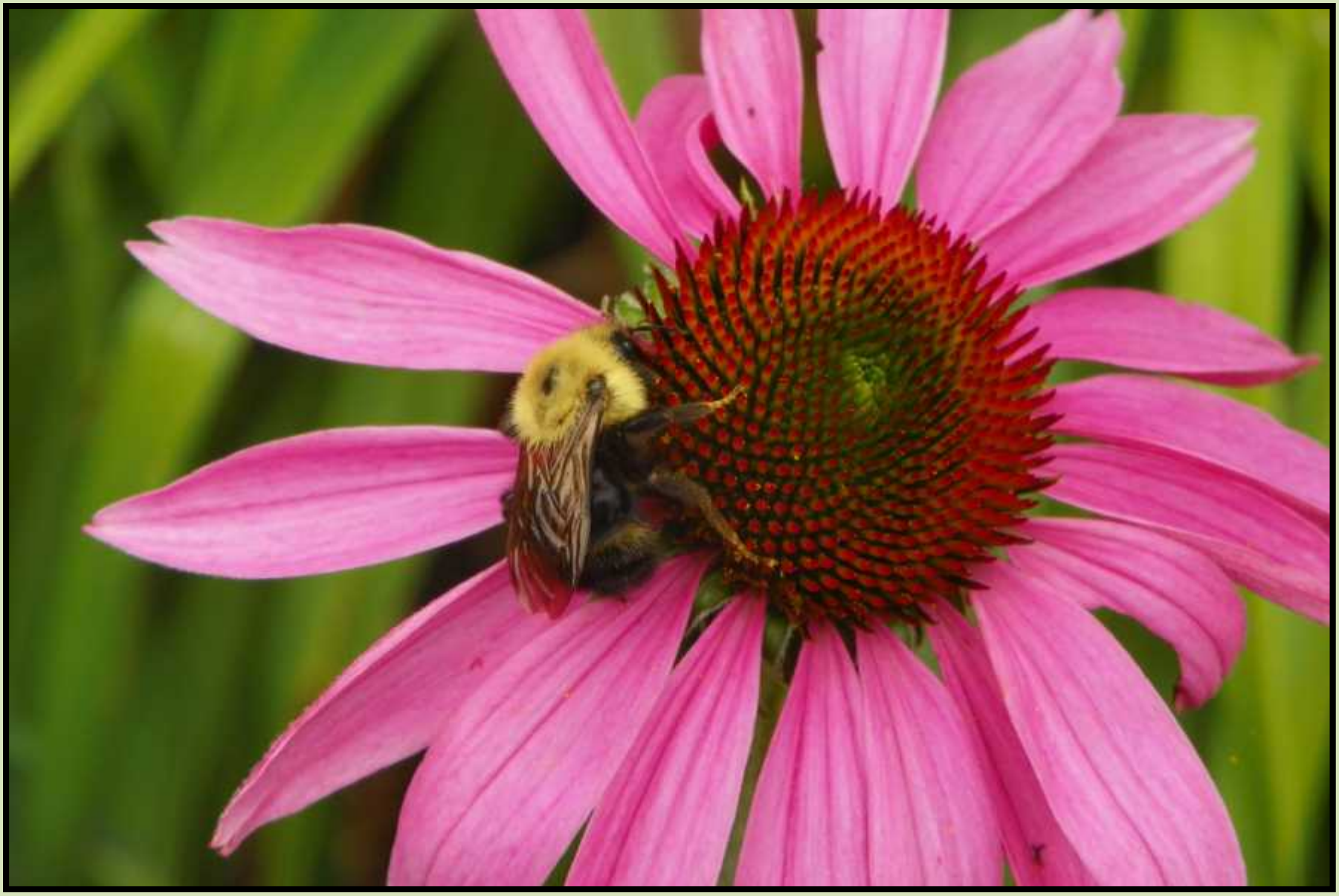
Red Admiral

Buddleia provide late season food

Black Swallowtail

Azaleas are a great early season food

The Bee Friendly Garden



The Bee Friendly Garden

Bees require many of the same features that attract birds and butterflies, providing for one helps the others. Bees are a vital part of our food system so enhancing our gardens for these pollinators is essential. They will appear as early in the spring as temperatures and food sources allow and remain until fall temperatures and lack of food force overwintering.

Perhaps we can adhere to the reminder that dandelions provide a very important early spring food for bees and not be too hasty to eliminate them from our home gardens.

Making a Bee Friendly Garden

Build a bee house

Mason bees are the most common inhabitants. Bee houses are available ready built or you can find plans to do it yourself. Mason bees are useful early pollinators.

There is a good summary of some of the bees species found in Nova Scotia at the Halifax Garden Network site and from CapeBreton

Make a bee bath

Bees and other beneficial insects — ladybugs, butterflies, and predatory wasps — all need fresh water to drink but most can't land in a conventional bird bath without crashing. Line a shallow bowl or plate with rocks. Add water, but leave the rocks as dry islands to serve as landing pads.

Refresh the water daily, adding just enough to evaporate by day's end.

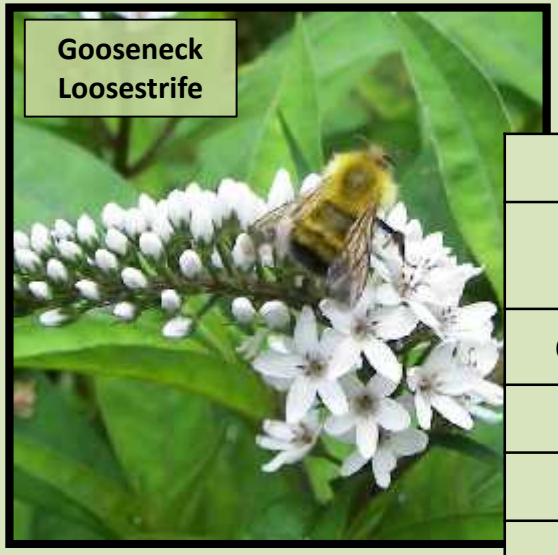
Making a Bee Friendly Garden

Provide nutritious bee food

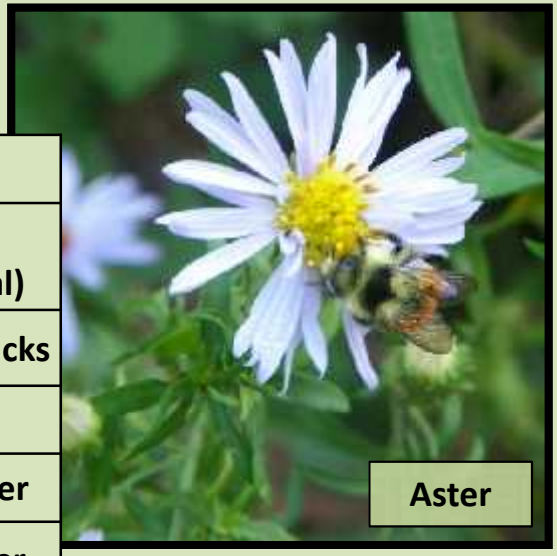
Bees eat two things: nectar (loaded with sugar, it's a bee's main source of energy) and pollen (which provides proteins and fats).

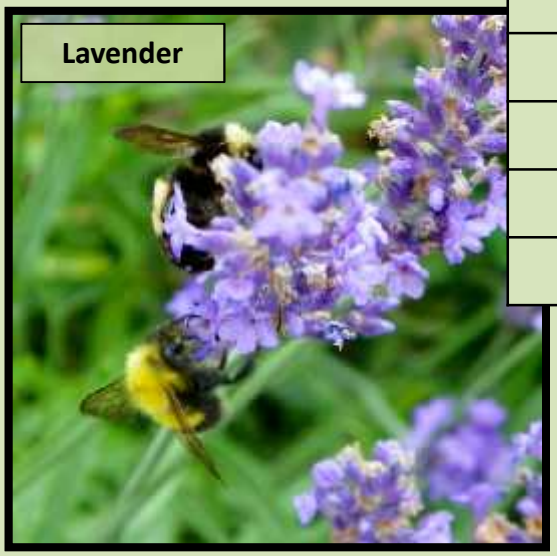
Choose a variety of plants that flower at different times so there's always a snack available for when bees are out and about. Bees are not that fussy and a continuous selection of bloom will satisfy. Many of our typical garden plants seem ready built for bee visitation.

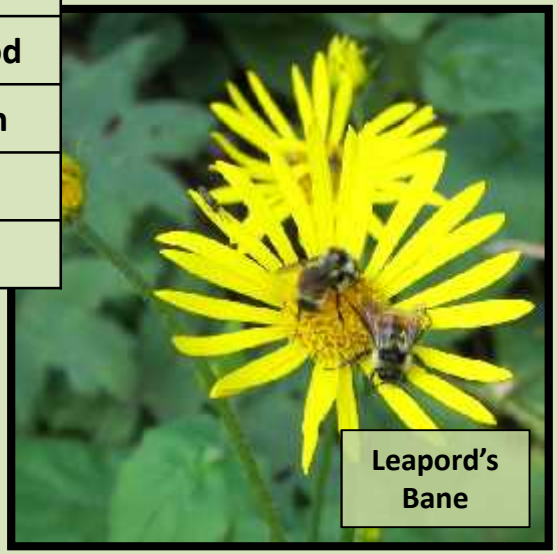
Examples of Plants to Provide Bees with Good Food



Early	Mid-season	Late
Blueberry	Blackberry	Aster (perennial)
Cotoneaster	Cat mint	Beggar's tricks
Crabapple	Catnip	Borage
Cranberry	Chives	Coneflower
Crocus	Dahlia	Cornflower
Foxglove	Hyssop	Cosmos
Heliotrope	Lavender	Goldenrod
Hazelnut	Raspberry	Pumpkin
Heather	Sunflower	Sedum
Primrose	Yarrow	Squash







Upcoming Events and News

The Antigonish Garden Club
March Meeting
Tuesday, March 15 7PM
St. Paul's Anglican Church
Preparing a New Vegetable Plot
Speaker: Yvonne Maas
All Are Welcome

The Lismore & District Garden Club
April Meeting
Monday, April 11th, 7:00 PM
at the Lismore Hall
All Are Welcome

Upcoming Events and News

Lismore & District Garden Club held a very successful and well attended event at The Lismore Community Hall Feb. 20. There were members from several District Garden Clubs.

For those of you unable to attend and who might be interested in ordering a Magnolia, check out the information at The Willow Garden website

Upcoming Events and News

The Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Soc. Seed Exchange
The 2016 Exchange will be open to the public after February 29.
The list and ordering information is online.
171 entries composed of Rhododendrons, Azaleas
and many Companion Plants

NSAGC Annual Convention
June 3-4, 2016
The Wellness Center, Westville Road
Register soon
There is a great line up of speakers.

Upcoming Events and News

Seventh Annual

ATLANTIC CANADA

RARE & UNUSUAL PLANT SALE

Atlantic Canada's Premier Horticultural Event

check Facebook page

With Over Fifteen Specialty Plant Vendors
From Across the Region

Free Entry / Plenty of Parking / Rain or Shine

May 22nd, 1-4pm
Farmers' Market Venue
downtown Annapolis Royal
across from the wharf.

For more information contact Jill @ (902)532-7777 or jill@bunchberrynurseries.ca

This is a great "plant event"

Advance Notice
The Annual District Fall Rally is being hosted by
The Antigonish Garden Club
October 15, 2016
at The Arisaig Parish Hall
The planned theme is “Get Down & Dirty”


The Orchid has bloomed