



April Newsletter

Spring Is Here!

Did we just have the longest winter in history? Probably not, but my need to get out in the garden this year is a bit more intense than ever before. In this issue I will give tips on growing asparagus, planting seed potatoes, herb and vegetable gardening in containers. I have a list below with spring seeds and plants that can go out early. (Just in case you

feel the need to get out in the garden too!)

The Easter Lily is our traditional flower for Easter but do you know why? I have included the story of "The Easter Lily" plus how to plant them outside after blooming.

I am repeating my Grandma Vi's

Natural Dyed Easter Egg Recipes from a newsletter last year.

She passed away a few years ago but her sharing of garden knowledge and fun projects will always be with me. Enjoy this newsletter and

Happy Spring!



Inside this issue:

Planting Asparagus	2
Cool Weather Flowers	2
Container Potatoes?	3
"The Smart Pot"	3
Planting Easter Lilies Outside	4
The History of the Easter Lily	4
Cool Weather Herbs and Gramma Vi's Eggs	5

Plant these vegetable seeds and plants out early!

April 15

asparagus (roots)
beet seed
carrot seed
chard seed
kohlrabi seed
lettuce seed
onion sets

parsnip seed
pea seed
seed potatoes (early, midseason, late)
radish seed
rhubarb roots
spinach seed

You can plant all of these out early depending on what our weather is doing. If the garden isn't too wet to till you can get all of these planted in April.

Grand Opening

**Keep May 23rd
Open for
Patty's Plants &
Northleaf
Winery's
Wine
&
Garden
Party
Details coming
soon**

Planting Asparagus

Plant asparagus in early spring, after the soil has warmed up to about 50 degrees F. There is no advantage to planting the crowns earlier in cold, wet soils. They will not grow until the soil warms and there is danger of the plants being more susceptible to disease if crowns are exposed to cold, wet soils over a prolonged period. Plant the asparagus where it will not shade the other vegetables and will not be injured when the rest of the garden is tilled.

Make sure you pick an area that has good drainage. Asparagus roots do not like water-logged soils that will lead to root rot. It prefers a soil pH of 6.5-7.5., and will not do well if the pH is less than 6.0. There are soil test kits available or you can call your county extension office to find out where to send a soil sample in.

It is best to plant an all male variety like Jersey Knight. (I do carry this variety in packages of 5 roots) This variety produces spears only on male plants. Seeds produced on female plants fall to the ground and become a seedling weed problem in the garden. Female plants also have to expend more energy to produce the seeds that decreases the yields of asparagus spears on female plants. The all-male hybrids out-yield the old Mary Washington varieties by 3 to 1. Dig a trench no deeper than 5 to 6 inches. You don't need to plant them deeper as it doesn't

produce any higher yields and may even decrease the yield. Mix the soil with good organic planting mix or compost. Then use a higher phosphate additive like bonemeal to get the roots off to a good start. Spread the roots out



over the bonemeal. They should be placed 12-18" apart in rows 3ft apart. After planting, you can gradually cover the crowns with a few inches of soil as the asparagus grows, until the trench is filled in. Or you can fill it in all at once but you must make sure you don't compact the soil in that area or the of the asparagus will be severely reduced. Spears should show growth within one week in moist soils.

Do not harvest the asparagus during the planting year. The spears grow into ferns. The ferns produce food for the plant and then move it down to the crown for next year's spear growth. Asparagus is very drought tolerant and can usually grow without extra watering because it finds moisture deep in the soil. However, if it doesn't rain when planting or afterwards, you should water the crowns. Otherwise the plants will become stressed and won't grow as well.

One crown should yield approx. 1/2 lb when established.

Cool Weather Flowers

There are many cool weather flowers in which you could either plant in containers or in the ground.

When I say cool weather flowers this means you may have to change some of your plantings when the weather turns warmer and switch to plants that like the hotter weather. But cool season containers let us to enjoy the first flowers of the spring season and for that, it's worth the effort. Here's just a few.

Pansies and violas will definitely get you in the gardening spirit. Keep deadheading them and they

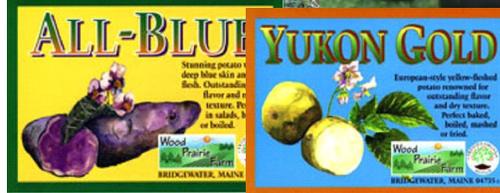
will continue to put on their happy faces.

Snapdragons remind me of gardening with my grandmother. She would show me how the snapdragons could talk and we would play with them for hours. Depending on the variety you choose, the taller ones look great in the center of a container garden. They also attract hummingbirds.

Dianthus as an annual is so hardy that it may even return year after year. The cooler the better for this one .

Container Potatoes?

Ever think of growing a few potato plants in bushel baskets or smart pots(an aeration container)? Well, you can — it's easy and fun. You can be a potato grower in the smallest yard or just on the back porch or patio. You can line a bushel basket with landscape fabric or plastic, if plastic punch a few holes in the bottom. You can also try the “New Smart Pots” for container growing. Use a good organic potting soil or planting mix. Put a 4- or 5-inch layer of soil in the basket and lay a few seed pieces 6 to 8 inches apart, then top with 3 or 4 more inches of soil. You may topdress with an organic granular fertilizer or add some to the container when planting. Keep the basket in a warm, sunny place. As the plants grow, add more soil if needed around the stems to give the tubers room to expand, and keep the container watered when needed.



See January 09 newsletter for varieties of certified organic seed potatoes available. www.pattysplants.com

About Smart Pots- It's Sustainable

The patented Smart Pot is for the gardener who wants a container that will grow the best possible plant. It is a new and unique advancement in container technology that is better than any other method of container gardening. It is-

- Better than Standard Black Plastic Containers
- Better than Ceramic (Clay) Containers
- Better than Raised Beds
- Better than Decorative Containers

The patented Smart Pot is a soft-sided, fabric container that has the rigidity to hold its shape and can even support large trees. In fact, the Smart Pot was originally developed for and has been used by commercial tree growers for over twenty years.

The Smart Pot is an aeration container. It has a unique ability to air-prune and enhance a plant's root structure. A highly branched, fibrous root structure is the key to growing a better plant – with more flowers and fruits, and more resistance to insects and diseases.

Benefits of Smart Pots

- Higher Quality Plants Grow In Less Time
- Roots Stay Cooler During Hot Weather
- Inexpensive
- Light Weight
- Attractive, Simple Design
- Plants Need Repotting Less Often
- Reusable
- More Forgiving A Less Expensive Potting Soil Can Be Used
- Plants Can Be Grown In The Smart Pot's Sides & Bottom
- Non-Breakable Fabric Lasts Doesn't Crack From Frost Or If Dropped
- Grow All Kinds Of Plants Annuals, Vegetables, Herbs, Roses, House Plants & More!

From: www.smartpots.com

Planting Easter Lilies Outside

Prepare a well-drained garden bed in a sunny location with rich, organic matter. Good drainage is the key for success with lilies.

Tip: Dig a hole and fill it with water to see how long it takes for the water to drain. This will tell you if you've picked a good spot for it.

Plant the Easter Lily bulbs at the same level they are in the pots, top dress with a little extra soil. Plant bulbs at least 10 to 15 inches apart.

As the original plants begin to die back, cut the stems back to

the soil surface. New growth will start growing. Easter Lilies, are forced to bloom for Easter so you will only have flowers then. Sometimes, if you are lucky it will bloom a second time in the summer but don't hold your breath.

Another planting tip to think about is that lilies like their roots in shade and their heads in the sun. Mulching helps hold mois-



ture in between watering and keeps the soil cool. You can also plant annuals or perennial at the base to act as a "living mulch". The Easter Lily bulbs are surprisingly hardy here. Just be sure to provide winter protection by mulching the ground with straw, pine needles, leaves or fine bark mulch. Carefully remove straw or leaves in the spring to allow new shoots to come up.

Note: Easter Lilies are poisonous so be careful with children and pets.



History of The Easter Lily

The Easter Lily -- *Lilium longiflorum* - is native to the southern islands of Japan. In the 1880's, it was widely produced in Bermuda and the bulbs were shipped to the USA. In World War I, the Japanese were the biggest exporter of Easter Lilies.

In America, we began growing them when a World War I soldier, Louis Houghton, filled his suitcase full of lily bulbs and brought them to the South coast of Oregon in 1919. He gave the bulbs to all his friends. Then, when Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941, you could no longer purchase them from Japan. So the people who were growing the lilies as a hobby decided to grow them commercially because they could make a huge profit selling them. In 1945 the Easter Lily

was called "White Gold" and there were over a 1000 growers, from Vancouver, Canada to Long Beach, California.

We have many Easter traditions from egg decorations and hunts; gift baskets and chocolate bunnies, sunrise church services to parades, and, we must not forget the Easter Lily. There are a few different versions of why this lily is our traditional flower on Easter.

One Biblical lore, is that The Easter Lily was called the "white-robed apostles of hope," because lilies were found growing in the area Christ had his final moments. It's said that the beautiful white lilies sprung up where drops of Christ's sweat fell to the ground in his final hours. This is why churches at Easter

time fill their alters and surround their crosses with Easter Lilies, to honor the memory of Jesus Christ and hope of everlasting life.

Another lore is that when Eve left the Garden of Eden she shed real tears of regret, and from those tears sprung up lilies. The idea being that true regret is the beginning of beauty.

These thoughts are why the beautiful, white Easter Lily is our traditional flower with it symbolizing purity, virtue, innocence, hope and life.

Whether you give it as a gift or enjoyed in your own home, The Easter Lily serves as a beautiful reminder that Easter is a time for rejoicing, celebrating and renewal.

Patty's Plants

220 S. Janesville St.
Milton, WI
53563

Phone: 608-580-0066
Fax: 866-336-6720
email:patty@pattysplants.com

► **Natural & Organic
Garden Supply**

We're on the web!
www.pattysplants.com



Cool Weather Herbs

Many herbs can be planted in cool weather too. Add them to your flowerbeds or containers.

Here are a few choices:

Oregano, Thyme, Mint, Marjoram, Rosemary,

Sage and Lavender these would be fun planted with your flowers or vegetables.



**Put down your organic lawn care product early.
Corn Gluten Plus for weed seed prevention.**

Grandma Vi's Natural Dyed Easter Eggs

6 large eggs
4 cups water
Yellow and red onion skins
String

Bring water to a boil.

While waiting for the water to boil (or do some ahead of time), put eggs in onion skins, wrap the string all around the eggs to hold the skins in place.

When the water is ready, gently place the eggs in the water. Bring it back to a boil. Then turn down and let simmer for 15-20 minutes.

Cool eggs and unwrap.

For variations:

Hard boil the eggs and cool.

Use water from freshly cooked beets or cranberries for pink dye.

Use green beans or broccoli water for light green dye.

Use the water right away or save in frig. a day

or two until ready to dye eggs.

Add 1T vinegar to the veggie water. Place the cooked eggs in and soak. When they have turned color, take them out.

You can boil eggs in tea water, use raspberry tea for pink, black tea for brown.

Boiling with spinach leaves, they will turn them a pretty shade of green.

Soak the cooked eggs in grape juice, they will be light lavender.

Pomegranate juice will give them a great shade of dark pink.

Thanks Gramma for the natural tradition!



www.pattysplants.com
e-mail to patty@pattysplants.com