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Nursery News / Summer 2018

Closed BC Day August 6

Perennials at their Peak



Summer is a beautiful time here at the nursery. We continue to have a wonderful selection of fresh, healthy perennials that promise to add colour and style to your garden throughout the summer.

If you have a bare patch in your garden, or are gearing up for an outdoor summer event, now is a great time to find that perfect plant to complete the setting.

On a side note, did you know that we have been publishing newsletters since 1995?! Many of these articles are still very relevant today. Please check out our "Blast from the Past" article below on [High Performance Perennials](#) written by our very own Sue in 1998.

Looking for a Great Outdoor Job? We are Hiring!

Do you know someone who loves plants and is looking for an opportunity to work in a beautiful setting with a great team?

We are looking to fill full-time and part-time positions. Anyone who is interested can find more information [here](#). Please apply in person.

It's Time to Stop and Order your Roses

Gardeners are rediscovering the joy of growing roses. Roses arrive at the nursery in February as bare-root plants and are ready to be planted at that time. Our 2019 rose catalogue will be on our website by early September, at which time you are welcome to pre-order.

We order from [Weeks](#), [David Austin](#) and [Pan American](#) and these orders go in at the **end of July** so please make any **special requests before then**. You can come look at our suppliers' catalogues at the nursery or check them out online (see links above).

We hope that next year you will be surrounded by the beauty and fragrance of your favourite rose.



*Life of the Party -
New for 2019*

For the Birds



One of our bird baths for sale at the nursery

As the warm and dry summer weather sets upon us, water becomes a treasured commodity not just for your plants but also for the birds! **Birds need fresh water** for both drinking and bathing.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of a garden is watching the birds flit about and a **bird bath is a great way to attract them**.

Bird baths should mimic a shallow puddle with water depth between 1 and 3 inches. Place the bath close to a tree or shrub so the birds have somewhere to perch while watching out for the neighbourhood cats. Keep the bath clean and free of debris, replacing the water every 5 days or so and lastly, make sure it's in a location where you can sit and enjoy watching our feathered friends.

Soil Testing - What Can It Tell You?

By Faye

Most of us don't speak the language of soil, so we rely upon our plants to interpret. But sometimes even the plants are unclear; "I'm not feeling well" is all we can read from them.

Having your soil tested is the sure way to know what's happening underground, and it's an easy process available locally.

There are two levels of testing, just pH or a full soil analysis.

Soil pH is a measure of acidity and alkalinity in soils and can have a significant effect on plant health. A neutral pH of between 5.5 and 7 is the level at which nutrients in the soil are available for many of our **landscape plants** to absorb them.

Our high rainfall tends to keep soil on the acidic end (lower pH) of the spectrum.

Most **vegetable crops** however, like soil to be more alkaline; beets for example are very sensitive to pH and won't form bulbs if the pH is too low.

Adding lime to the soil is the best way to raise the pH but it helps to first know whether you NEED to do this, depending on what you are growing.

Generally, lawns and veggie beds need lime every year, with the veggies *preferably* done in the fall, at a rate of 1 pound of dolomitic lime per square yard.

A further analysis is also available, with a more detailed level of nutrient values. For most of us, just the Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium measurement is all we need. (This is the NPK you see on fertilizer packages.)

Collecting the soil samples is easy. The important thing is to gather it from the depth at which the plant roots will be reaching for nutrition, about 6-8" down. In any given garden area, take several samples at this depth then mix them together in a bucket. Take about 2 cups of the mixed soil and put it in a clean plastic zip lock bag, one bag per area. The photo shows my samples taken from 4 beds. I was shocked to see how acidic my soil was, and it certainly explained those bulbless beets!



Bagged and labeled samples

Where to take the samples?

Two choices are available locally:

- [MB LABS](#) in the Sidney industrial area offers different levels of testing, either just pH which is 4 bags (areas) for \$20, or NPK analysis with fertilizer recommendations for either organic (\$48) or chemically (\$37) fertilized soil. Email: info@mblabs.com or drop in at 2062 Henry Ave. W, Sidney.
- [Integrity Sales](#) offers complete soil analysis for \$60, including advice on what to do regarding fertilizer amendments and soil improvement. Located at 2180 Keating X Road, just take your soil samples in and the results will be available in 2-3 weeks.

We highly recommend both of these resources; they are reliable, accurate and your plants will thank you for testing your soil!

Blast from the Past

Russell Nursery Newsletter edition: Summer of 1998

High Performance Perennials

by Susan Tice

Mention perennial borders to many gardeners and they see in their mind's eye a long stylish sweep of perfectly placed plants that flower constantly and in perfect colour coordination. These plants never fall over or outgrow their allotted space and they certainly never succumb to disease or get eaten by slugs or other pests.

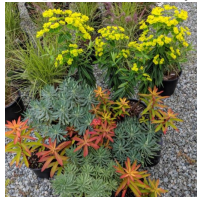
The reality, of course, is quite different. Too many perennials are fussy or lax or messy or look good for far too short a time. Most of us, though, don't really expect perfection. We would be happy with reliable plants that earn a well-deserved place in the garden and don't cause us too much trouble. With this thought in mind, we have come up with a list of some of our favourite perennials, ones that we consider to be 'high performance' plants.



In order for a plant to be considered a high performer, it has to meet several criteria. First, it has to have either a long bloom period, or more than one season of interest. Secondly, it has to be easy to care for and fairly resistant to pests and disease. And last, but by no means least, it must be well behaved, which means being more or less self-supporting and not too inclined to spread far and wide in the garden (or at least be easy to control). This list is arranged roughly in order of bloom.

- **Epimedium** (Barrenwort) - The Epimediums are four season plants. The flowers appear in late winter, followed by fresh foliage that looks good all season. The leaves turn red in the fall and stay on all winter. They should be cut back just before flowering. Sun or shade.

- **Euphorbias** (spurge) - Visitors to the nursery this spring have been awed by the magnificent *Euphorbia characias* subs. *wulfenii* growing in our herb garden. An evergreen type, it has been flowering for three months now. Sun or part shade. *E. amygdaloides* var. *robbiae* is another elegant evergreen type, but of a smaller stature. Its tendency to spread makes it a good groundcover, especially in dry shade. These are only two of a very large group of plants, many of which are very garden worthy.



Various euphorbia

- **Alchemilla mollis** (Lady's Mantle) - Hated by some, loved by most, this plant has the most beautiful foliage topped by frothy chartreuse flowers that last well into summer. Control its spread by deadheading as soon as the flowers begin to fade. Sun or part shade.



Alchemilla mollis

- **Astrantia major** (Masterwort) - Astrantias deserve much wider usage. They have small "pincushion" flowers from late spring right through the summer and require little care besides regular watering. Sun or part shade.
- **Hostas** - Adaptable to a wide range of conditions hostas are the stars of the shade garden. Many, however, will perform well in sun or part shade. Protection from slugs is about the only maintenance required.

- **Astilbes** - With a bit of planning it is possible to have astilbes in bloom from late spring to fall. They come in all sizes and colours, and they have great foliage, which also happens to be unpalatable to slugs. Given moist soil, they are possibly the easiest perennial for partial shade or shade.



Astilbe

- **Coreopsis verticillata** (Tickseed) - Masses of small yellow flowers cover this airy plant all summer. 'Moonbeam' has pale yellow flowers and 'Zagreb' has golden yellow flowers. Sun or part shade.

- **Ornamental Grasses** - These can fill a number of roles in almost any garden. If you have never used ornamental grasses before they are well worth looking into. Many have three or four season interest, and most require minimal care.

- **Echinacea purpurea** - It's not for nothing that the cultivar 'Magnus' is perennial of the year. A strong growing plant with striking light purple flowers all summer.



*Echinacea
purpurea*

- **Rudbeckia** - Better known as black-eyed Susan or as the gloriosa daisy. Striking deep yellow flowers from mid-summer to late fall. Strong and trouble-free. Sun or part shade.

- **Crocosmia 'Lucifer'** - Very hard to resist. The vertically pleated foliage is a deep emerald green and is especially beautiful when back-lit by the warm tones of late afternoon sun. This plant is absolutely breath-taking in bloom, topped with brilliant red flowers in mid-summer. Garden reds come in different dosages. This one is extra strength. Sun or part shade.



Crocosmia

- **Sedums** - The varieties 'Autumn Joy' and 'October Daphne' are particularly striking in the fall. Others in this large group of succulents flower at other times of the year, and all have handsome foliage in a wide range of colours. Sun or part shade.

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Russell Nursery is the BC distributor for **Halls English Greenhouses**. These quality greenhouses are available in a variety of sizes and models and several are set up at the nursery. For information please visit our [website](#).

Not sure which is the right greenhouse for you?

A **Halls Greenhouse Rep** will be pleased to visit your property for a free on-site consultation.

To make an appointment, please call 250-656-0384 or email russellnursery@telus.net



*October harvest
from the
greenhouse*



Call us at 250-656-0384

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