



QUALITY PLANTS &
KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF

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Nursery News / March 2021

COVID Protocols in Effect

Russell Nursery Springs into Action!

Welcome back gardeners! We're happy to be back from winter dormancy and we're ready to get you gardening! **Shrubs, trees, vines, perennials, pots, fertilizers, tools, seeds, herbs, and much, MUCH more is arriving daily** as we prepare the nursery for another glorious spring.

Last March, we had barely an inkling of the impact that COVID-19 would have upon us all. This March, we are hopeful that we'll all be vaccinated soon and can resume our social lives and maybe even travel! In the mean time, how fortunate we are to have our gardens in which to fruitfully occupy our time, stay safe, and enjoy the beauty (and tastiness) that they provide.

Let us know how we can help and we hope to see you soon!

Laurel & Sue



Growing Our Own

More than ever, Russell Nursery is committed to growing our own plants. This ensures that you get the strongest, healthiest trees, shrubs, and perennials, etc., around. The photo above shows just one of our greenhouses ... it's jam-packed with plant potential! We are proud parents to your future plant babies. Stay tuned ... when these plants grow on and grow up, they'll be available in the nursery.



Monday Closings (Again)

After Monday March 22nd, Russell Nursery will be closed on Mondays. Why? All those babies that we were just talking about! They need our undivided attention to grow strong. You know, they require potting, fertilizing, and watering (and then there is talking to, coaxing, and coddling). We apologize for any inconvenience but please know, it will be worth it in the long run to provide the robust, beautiful plants you expect from us. Opening hours stay the same ... 9:00-4:30.

Yes, You Can Garden With Bambi!

"Will the deer eat this?" is a question we hear every day, every

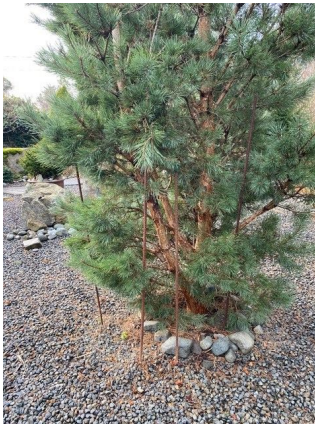
hour at the nursery. We all know how frustrating, annoying, and expensive it is to see our new plantings or our old favourites decimated by hungry herbivores. But there is no need to be deprived of a beautiful garden if you are armed with information and strategies.

Strategy 1: Plant what the deer don't like. Yes, they are fickle creatures, and their tastes vary herd by herd. What is safe some years can be added to their menu in another.



Anything with acrid sap, scented foliage, fuzzy leaves, or prickly stems is *usually* safe. All the **Euphorbias**, when cut, exude a white sap which is unpleasant and can be harmful to many people and animals alike. **Choisya ternata** and **Prostanthera cuneata**, (Alpine mint bush) both feature leaves with a pungent aroma to their leaves and so are disliked by deer.

Many perennials deter deer because they have scented foliage and/or are fuzzy; think **Salvia**, **Geranium macrorrhizum**, **Artemisia**, **Agastache**, **Achillea** (yarrow), **Perovskia** (Russian Sage), or **Nepeta**. **Most** (but not all, ask us at the nursery) **conifers** are too crunchy for deer lips; or perhaps they just don't taste good. **Ornamental grasses, peonies and ferns** are *almost always* safe.



Strategy 2: Physical barriers may be necessary.

Building a fence, while expensive is the most successful solution. However, if a fence is not in your budget simple barriers around individual plants can be effective.

For instance, fine netting supported by stakes can protect individual plants and also dissuade male deer from rubbing their antlers on your shrubs and young trees in the fall. The *Pinus sylvestris* 'Watereri' in the photo is protected by rebar alone. Vulnerable lower trunks of young trees can be protected from antlers with a tree guard (sold at the nursery).

Strategy 3: Repellents

Scent is a powerful tool that deters deer and other wild animals. Plantskydd© is made of dried porcine or bovine blood and has an unpleasant smell, which fortunately is not noticeable to humans after the

first day of application. To deer, it has the smell of death and they are typically repelled for the entire season after one application. Bobbex© is another popular deterrent that does require repeat applications.

Summary:

Whenever possible, give the new plants some protection until established. Plants of any kind are better equipped to handle browsing when settled in. As deer just don't seem to read our lists of deer-resistant plants, Russell Nursery does not guarantee plants against deer predation. Unfortunately, there is no such thing as an entirely deer-proof plant.

Need a more comprehensive list of deer-resistant plants? Check out this [list](#) on the **Victoria Master Gardeners** website.

Co-existing with wildlife is one of the many pleasures of living on Vancouver Island, and while we enjoy the beauty of these noble beasts roaming free, we can still create and find joy in a beautiful garden.

What's All the Hoopla About Handy Hoops?

Not everything that is wonderful to have in your garden is lushly green or sports a dazzling flower or provides you with something delectable for dinner.

There are items, that, although they are not lush, dazzling, or edible, are so useful in supporting your greenery, pretty flowers, and food plants that every gardener's life is improved by having a few around. I am, of course, referring to **Handy Hoops**.

What the heck is a Handy Hoop you ask? It is a strategically bent bar (think of a half-circle with long legs) of quarter-inch hot-rolled steel that comes in 8 different sizes and that can be used to tame your unruly grasses, harness raspberry canes/peonies/dahlias or any plant at all with a



tendency to flop. The glorious Fox Lily in the photo is about to flop. Good thing there is a Handy Hoop in place to hold her up!.

Useful they are, but obnoxiously obtrusive they are not. Handy Hoops are designed to be subtle supports that blend into the garden especially after a few years when the original deep grey colour oxidizes to a pleasing rust.

You might be interested to know that Handy Hoops are locally made. Patty Brown, staff member, proprietor of Brilliant Blooms Floral & Garden Design, and much-respected instructor at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific, produces them annually with the help of other staff and HCP students. And now you know what some of us get up to when Russell Nursery is closed for the month of January.

Plants are the star actors in our gardens but Handy Hoops are, hands down, the clear winners in the Best Supporting Actor category! Make sure you have a few in your tool shed for those inevitable times you find a plant teetering on the

brink of collapse. They are just inside the door of the Russell Nursery shop on the right. Get yours today.

The Mason Bees are Ready for Action

Last summer may have been our best year ever for Mason Bees, **sowe have a good supply of cocoons** this year. These fully formed bees are just eager to be outside, buzzing in your garden and pollinating your fruit trees and bushes.

We also have mason bee houses for sale. Install houses in a sunny spot with sturdy support and when the temperature has been around 14 degrees for several days it's time to place the cocoons in a small release box tucked into the top of the bee house, and let the bees do the rest.

Weather not cooperating? **We recommend a staggered approach** to putting the cocoons out for release; then if there are weather issues there is always another batch coming along. Remember that the males (smaller cocoons) emerge about 2 weeks before the females, and will need nectar-rich flowers to sustain them until the girls come out and the beautiful cycle starts again. This is when you want pollen-rich blossoms for the females to work their magic.

The staff at Russell Nursery are all knowledgeable about mason bees but there is also a great wealth of information on our [website](#).

Nurturing mason bees and helping their pollination work is a joyful and rewarding experience for gardeners and all who love to eat the fruits of the bees' labour.

Fire Hazard Mitigation for Gardeners and Homeowners

Do you stack your firewood against a wall of your house?

Maybe it is time to rethink that practice!

Many of us who reside on the Saanich Peninsula and surrounding islands are fortunate to live near (or even within) Douglas Fir forests. The pleasures are many living in these wildland urban interface neighbourhoods. Critters are abundant, as is peace and quiet (okay granted, there is very little quiet when the robins and tree frogs sing their songs of love Every. Single. Day. throughout spring (but that's kind of lovely, don't you think?)).



Living adjacent to forests can however pose a threat in the form of wildfire. Although wildfires are considered to be a natural part of a healthy wildland ecosystem allowing nutrient recycling and habitat diversification to occur, as gardeners and home owners we want to discourage fire as much as humanly possible! **What can be done to protect our homes and gardens?**

For starters, it is **helpful to create a 1.5 metre area around your home** (including attachments such as decks) **that contains no combustibles and to keep your yard clear of debris** that could easily catch on fire from a stray ember. **Prune your large trees** so that there is at least 2 metres between the ground and the bottom-most branch. And did you know that coniferous trees are more flammable than deciduous trees? When choosing trees that will be close to your house, **consider choosing a maple or ornamental cherry rather than a spruce or a pine**. It's the resins in conifers that makes them more ignitable. As for firewood, it's preferable to take a few extra steps to a purpose-built wood shed than it is to have fire fuel against your home!

These are only a few tactics and a bit of information to help concerned gardeners to mitigate the threat of wildfire. If you would like more detailed information about wildfire mitigation ask for Vicki, our resident expert, when you are next at the nursery. She would be **happy to speak with you about plant choices or strategies**. As well, the [BC FireSmart manual](#) is an excellent resource.

Zoom Classes: Four Seasons in a Greenhouse with Brian and Faye



So many of you were disappointed last year when we had to cancel our greenhouse classes. **Through the magic of Zoom, we're happy to bring back the opportunity to learn more about managing your glass house!**

Join Brian (pictured left in his own greenhouse) **and Faye for their informative and inspiring presentation**, which will show you how to make the best use of your greenhouse every month of the year. Each season has a unique value for gardeners, from seeding to growing to harvest and even entertaining.

Learn how to keep your glass house clean and productive; how to cool it off in the summer, how to choose the best soil, start seeds, water, fertilize, etc. You will also get tips on useful plant supports as well as see photos from Brian's and Faye's own gardens and greenhouses.

The presentation will take about 45 minutes, with time allotted at the end for questions from participants. Register soon as the number of participants is limited.

Dates and Times: Thursday March 25th 7:30 PM or Sunday March 28th 2PM

Price: \$10.00

How to Join the Workshop: On the day of your workshop, you will receive an email containing a link to the workshop. Click on the link and follow the instructions. Don't forget to include your email address when you register.

[Register here](#)

Pest Patrol

Do you struggle with winter moth or black vine weevils in your garden?

Luckily there are a number of safe and effective strategies to contain the damage caused by these little menaces in our gardens!

Click here to [learn more...](#)



Summer-Flowering Bulbs and Tropical Houseplants

As promised in the last newsletter, Russell Nursery now has bulbs to plant in spring for glorious summer and fall flowers plus a dazzling array of lush tropical plants to adorn your home. We have you covered inside and out!

The experiment in bringing in summer flowering bulbs for spring planting is a roaring success. There are still some bulbs in stock; however, far fewer than when they first arrived. Next year, we'll know better and will order more.



Promise!!

For all those folks who purchased bulbs this year, see our [helpful tips and instructions](#) to help you get your bulbs happily settled into their new homes in your garden.

Here is a peek at the jungle that now inhabits one of our greenhouses.

It's a little taste of paradise and a huge blast of vibrant colour. So good to see at this time of year as we await some colour in our own gardens.

We are looking forward to talking plants with you soon.

Happy Spring!

