



QUALITY PLANTS & KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF

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Nursery News / June 2021

COVID Protocols in Effect

All the News That's Fit to Plant!

Welcome to summer! What a pleasure to be able to invite friends into our gardens once again (especially as we've all been furiously weeding, mowing, dividing, staking, mulching, digging, and planting. All. By. Ourselves. For soooooooooooooo very long).

We remain grateful to all you fellow gardeners who visited Russell Nursery over the past year. Your enthusiasm and commitment (your ideas, your curiosity, your creativity, and your love of plants) helped us get through the perils of the pandemic with smiles on our faces. We are so glad you came by!

Isn't it fantastic to be returning to a semblance of 'normal'? Go forth and show off those well-tended gardens. We hope to see you all again soon.

Sue & Laurel



Winter Veggie Starts

We know that you are not ready to hear it (summer veggies are only barely begun after all), but as responsible nursery staff we must insist. **It is time to start thinking about winter veggies.** Seed now (though it is already too late for brussel sprouts) or take a deep breath and know that Russell Nursery has you covered (except for the brussel sprouts).

We'll be offering winter veggie starts from about mid-July on through the fall.

What will be on offer? We will grow a varied



Summer Veg Pesto

by Christine

A gardener can only eat so many fresh vegetables. After eating every conceivable stir fry, salad, and casserole imaginable, a successful kitchen gardener needs a change in menu as well as a way to use up the bounty. You can give some away of course. Or you can make something else

selection of kale, cabbage, radicchio, purple-sprouting broccoli, cauliflower, etc. for over-wintering and some lettuce, mustard, chard, and choy for fall eating ... maybe a bit of basil too, just to extend the season a bit.

It may feel too early to be thinking about winter crops but you'll be glad you made yourself do it when you have some nice kale to add to a warming stew on a chilly day. And have you started your Christmas shopping yet? (Just kidding :))

BTW, the cabbage in the photo above is beautiful as well as tasty. It's Viola deo Di Verona, an heirloom cabbage that we'll be seeding shortly. Pretty and delicious is a great combo!

entirely which you can also give away ... but might not want to.

I'll apologize in advance to those culinary types who will insist that pesto contains only basil, pine nuts, garlic, olive oil, and parmesan (and maybe lemon juice).

I am liberal in my interpretation and have made countless tasty variations. For me, it is more a matter of proportion to achieve a pesto-like consistency rather than slavish adherence to an ingredient list. So, what do you need?

3 cups greenery (herbs, kale, sorrel, etc.)
1/4 - 1/2 cup nuts or seeds
1/4 - 1/2 cup grated hard cheese (optional)
enough drizzles of oil and lemon juice to achieve that pesto-like texture

Whiz together in a food processor and spread on bread, or mix into mayo for a fancy aioli, toss into tomato sauce for an extra zippy pasta or feel free to eat it with a spoon.

Meet the Staff

When you visit Russell Nursery, you can receive help from any of the well-informed horticulturalists that make up our staff complement. But who are we? In the interests of getting to know us, we created a new **Meet the Staff** segment. Each newsletter will feature a few of us to help you recognize staff members/fellow plant nerds in the Russell Nursery community.

Introducing Sue

How long have you worked at the nursery? 25 years

Why did you get into horticulture?

I was looking for a career change after many years in hospitality. Garden centre work seemed to be a good fit with my skills and interests. And sure enough, it was!

When someone visits the nursery, they are likely to find me ...

out around the nursery talking to customers and helping in the shop. Some days behind the scenes doing ordering or planning or paying bills. Every day is different and even after all this time, very rewarding. It's fun to talk about plants and there is always something new to learn.

What are your top three favourite plants and why?

It's too hard to pick only 3. I love how the seasons unfold and everything has its time to shine. I look forward to the first hellebores and the beautiful red poppies I see from my window right now. I wait in eager anticipation for the Casablanca lilies to unfurl and the incredible show put on by the Osakazuki maple by the front door. And the first roses and the blue of the lavender hedge and ...



Introducing Nathan

How long have you worked at the nursery? 24 years

Why did you get into horticulture?

My mom has been an avid gardener since I can remember. I mowed lawns for all the neighbours as a kid. Not happy at college, found out about Horticulture Centre's Pacific Horticulture College through my parents who were the caretakers at the time and this led me to a love of plants and the ability to work outdoors which suits my personality.

When someone visits the nursery, they are likely to find me ...

working the fields or in my greenhouse workshop building frames and/or cutting glass for the Hall's side of the company.



What are your top three favourite plants and why?

Ginkgo. Great form and interesting leaf, beautiful fall colour. Sword Fern. Tough Plant (dry shade), winter interest, low maintenance. Echinacea. Vibrant variety of flower colours, interesting seed heads, seeds for the birds.

Introducing Maddy

How long have you worked at the nursery? This is my 2nd season.

Why did you get into horticulture?

After working a few summer jobs in the industry, I was encouraged to take the Landscape Horticulture program at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific. I love working outside! Every day is different. Horticulture is such happy work.

When someone visits the nursery, they are likely to find me ... in trees and shrubs or behind the scenes taking care of plants.

What are your top three favourite plants and why?

All Ginkgos! Especially 'Troll'. Hydrangea paniculata 'Lavalamp Moonrock' ... like 'Limelight', but better. All Japanese Maples! So much variety :)



Introducing Kathryn

How long have you worked at the nursery? This is my 4th year.

Why did you get into horticulture?

Even as a child I loved plants. I landscaped the forest floor around my treehouse with mail order plants and much to my parents astonishment would weed the garden for fun! After university, my passion for plants led me to work in the Netherlands as a flower breeder for a number of years. But eventually my life's path found its way back to beautiful BC and of course who could resist working at such an amazing nursery!

When someone visits the nursery, they are likely to find me ...

in the shop, answering the phone and emails, fielding questions about plants and helping customers with their purchases. If you don't find me it's because I'm in the office doing officey stuff!

What are your top three favourite plants and why?

I love roses. How could you not love them?! It's their fragrance, colour, longevity and resilience; there's a reason they are the most loved flower throughout the world. My garden will never be without geranium Rozanne; such a simple perennial that blooms forever. The bees love it too! My favourite tree has to be Arbutus menziesii. I admire their beautiful bark, leaves, flowers and fruit but most of all their tenacious personality.

Tree Ring Circus: Drought Solutions for Happy Trees

With climate change, our summers are becoming hotter and drier. When summers are hot, we humans can enjoy a dip in the ocean or a cool drink in the shade. Our plants however, can't partake in those luxuries. What can a gardener do to keep their trees and shrubs happy through what may prove to be another droughty summer? There are several good options:



GreenWell Tree Surrounds are re-usable rings that hold water around the root zone of newly planted and/or small shrubs and trees. The Surround is meant to be sunk into the ground so that only 4 or 5 inches appears above the ground. This prevents water run off and has the added benefit of protecting plants from over-zealous mowers and weed whackers.



Dramm Tree Soaker Rings let .25 gallons of water/minute trickle into the soil around roots just where it is needed and is ideal for young trees and shrubs.



Hippo Bags hold 20 gallons of water that drips out slowly, thus needing only infrequent refilling. If you have a dog, these also protect new plantings and small trees and shrubs from repeated 'leg lifts'.



Soaker Hoses are the go-to solution for larger trees. Gardeners may have to move the soaker hose around in order to provide the best coverage for their big trees.

Tree size matters ...

So, why shouldn't you use a Surround or Soaker Ring on a large Doug Fir, Cedar, or other mature tree? The watering strategies used for new plantings and small shrubs/trees are ineffectual for big trees because the roots of large, well-established trees extend much further out than a foot or two.

How do you know where to water for the benefit of bigger trees?

Think of the tree's canopy as a big umbrella and look at where rain naturally drips off the outer edge of the canopy onto the ground. Just as rain slides down onto the ground just where the roots need it most, so

should a gardener choose to water there.

A word to the water-wise ...

It is important to keep your trees well watered during drought periods, however it is equally important not to overwater them. Conscientious gardeners may be erring on the side of too much rather than too little water. Interestingly, the symptoms of over- and under-watering can be remarkably similar ... yellowing leaves with brown tips can be signs that watering is an issue as can wilting leaves. You can always check whether you've watered enough by digging around in the soil. Is the top 1/2 inch wet but the soil is dry deeper down? If yes, you need to increase the watering. Is the soil sodden and heavy all around? Perhaps let the soil dry out for a while and go easy. With a bit of practice and checking around, you'll soon learn how much water is too much and how much water is too little. Your trees will thank you.

Do I Need to Prune my Tomatoes?

by Faye

(Please note that this is a slightly amended article on the subject that we published in 2019, but we thought that with all of you new growers trying your hand at veggies, it might be worth repeating.)

The short answer is yes, and no.

It depends on what kind of tomato you are growing:

Determinate vs. Indeterminate

This is the key piece of information to look for on the tag when you purchase your tomato start or seed.

Determinate tomato varieties have a **pre-determined** size (just like we do), according to their genetic make-up. They grow like bushes and need no pruning other than (later in the season) removing the leaves below the first flower cluster so that none touch the ground. Determinates tend to ripen their fruit earlier.

Indeterminates grow like vines and will keep climbing and producing fruit as long as they are alive. Endless, continuing growth ends up a tangled mess of branches and leaves if not kept in check.

Why is pruning important?

Like all plants, tomatoes depend on photosynthesis to grow. Pruning maximizes this process due to more sun exposure, while minimizing disease. Densely packed leaves take longer to dry, inviting all manner of bacterial and fungal intrusion. Allowing the sun to bless all of the leaves and developing tomatoes is the goal, especially in our relatively short growing season.



How do I prune?

As the tomato plant grows, little side shoots (suckers) sprout up in the crotches, or axils, between the main stem and leaf branches. Each one of these has the potential to grow into a fruiting stem or in fact, an entirely new plant. Remember too that this side branch will continue to have suckers as well, so it's an exponential growth cycle of uninhibited stems, branches and leaves...but the consequence is smaller fruit grown in self-imposed shade.

The ideal is to limit the plant to no more than 3-4 stems if grown outside and only 1 stem (2 at most) if grown in a greenhouse or a garden bed with limited

space. Overcrowding is not your friend if you are a tomato. Gently pinch off the little suckers when they are small and easy to remove. If you turn your back for a day or so, they can quickly grow to shocking proportions, so be vigilant!

What about staking?

For the greatest yield, almost all tomatoes need support to improve air circulation and keep fruit and leaves off the ground, where they are easy prey for disease and critters. Windy conditions are another consideration and a good reason to stake. Preferably install supports while the plant is still small so you won't damage any spreading roots or break off branches. There are many options:

Cages

Still the simplest, the ubiquitous tomato cage has grown up a little, now available in taller, wider, heavier forms. They are perfect for determinate varieties, and with the addition of a sturdy stake or two, are fine for indeterminates too.

Stakes

Easy to use for indeterminate (especially if you have pruned to one stem) and allow easy access for pruning. Simply hammer a 6' wood, bamboo or metal (rebar is good) stake about a foot into the ground, then tie the main stem to the stake, looping the tie completely around the stake first, then tie the plant to it with a soft, non-cutting tie.

Spirals

Very elegant, a tall metal spiral stake is set into the ground (past the first coil for stability) and you simply twine the vine around it, tying where needed.

End of season care:

By about the end of August, gradually start to withhold water, which stresses the plants a little and encourages the fruit already on the vine to ripen. Also, cut off any immature flowers and 'cap' the plant by cutting off the top as well as the ends of fruiting stems. This way, the fruit on the vine will ripen, without having to compete with any new ones forming. There is limited growing time left at this point, and new fruit won't have time to ripen.

Bring on the sunshine, and let's get this tomato season going. **Happy growing and bon appetit!**

Pest Patrol: There is a New Bug in Town

by Christine



Calligrapha californica coreopsivora or **Coreopsis Beetle** took North Saanich and neighbours by storm this spring. Many of us hadn't ever seen one and now we discover plants covered with them. And despite their name they do not stay put on coreopsis alone. Look out for them on your dahlias, especially within the folded leaves of growing tips where they cluster and munch. We've also had reports of an infestation in a wild flower meadow. A curse on munching insects with diverse culinary tastes!

What do we know about them?

The adult beetles are 7ish mm long with black and pale yellow/orange stripes and the black-headed larvae have a dark brown round body twice as wide as the head and three times as long.

Adult beetles lay eggs in the top layer of the soil around coreopsis plants. The eggs hatch and the larvae feed on the leaves. It is peculiar that none of us gardeners at the nursery or at your homes noticed the larvae or complained about the damage they wrought. I guess they were tiny and the damage minimal? We only discovered them after the larvae pupated and became the much more noticeable (and destructive) adult beetles. The adults chomp for only a few weeks before they lay their eggs and the cycle starts again. In theory then, they should be gone soon if only until next spring. Fingers-crossed.



How do you recognize Coreopsis beetle damage? Adults and larvae feed on the leaves, skeletonizing them by eating the soft tissue between the veins/leaf ribs or just eating the whole leaf and the stems for dessert. They aren't that picky and they eat fast. Here at the nursery, we noticed the damage only in conjunction with finding the beetle at the scene of the crime leaving no doubt as to who was the culprit!

How do you get rid of Coreopsis beetles? Controlling them is a challenge. They are tricky to pick off leaves (or from under pot rims where they hide) because at the lightest touch, they play dead, fall into the soil, and are near impossible to find. Here at the nursery, we've found that a hand-held vacuum using the crevice tool attachment works well to suck the bugs off the plants. Who knew that a vacuum would become a trendiest garden tool to own in 2021! Vacuuming (at least with Russell Nursery's vacuum) leaves foliage intact and, best of all, does not give the beetles a chance to play dead, fall to the ground, and disappear.

Whether hand-picking or vacuuming, drop the captured beetles into a bucket of soapy water (dish soap is fine) to kill them. Be sure to swish the soapy water around a bit to ensure the beetles are immersed and not just floating. They will crawl up the sides of the bucket and escape unless fully immersed.

Squishing them is gross and not recommended for aesthetic reasons. Ew and yuck.

Just so you know, we tried to feed a beetle dinner to the roving band of chickens that treat the nursery as their own feeding grounds. The chickens came over and had a good look at the beetles, turned up their little beaks, and stalked off without even a peck and without tipping!

The question remains as to whether the current infestation is a cyclical phenomenon like the emergence of cicadas this year in the southern US or are these pests here to stay? I guess we'll find out next spring.

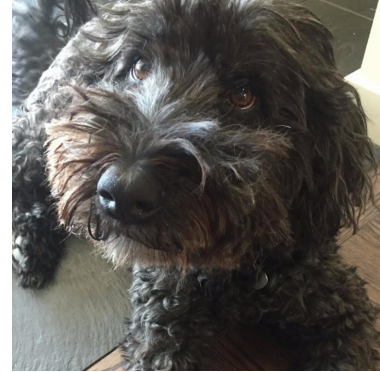
Greenhouse Growers' Alert

Take steps to cool your greenhouse TODAY ... this weekend will be HOT, HOT, HOT! It's time to put up that shade cloth, remove a few panes, and/or add a fan.

An Important Message from McDuff ...

It's been brought to my attention that some of my kind have been left in the car while their owners have gone plant shopping. This is unacceptable. There aren't even any shady parking spots!!

Do the humans not know that **leashed dogs are welcome at Russell Nursery**? Do they not know that **fresh water is available** for canine company and that it is not unheard of for **cookies, ear scratches, and belly rubs** to be liberally dispensed to all the good dogs?



I personally plead with all humans to bring your dogs out with you as you walk the nursery and hunt for new plants. As dogs, we really appreciate your dedication to choosing an assortment of new perennials, shrubs, and trees for us to pee upon. It is important work and we love you for it. But please ... **keep us close, on leash, and with you as you shop.**

Sincerely,

McDuff "Scruffy" Robinson-Kenwood
