

Carleton Place and District Horticultural Society November 2nd Meeting Recap

A fun and informative evening was had at the November meeting of the Carleton Place and District Horticultural Society (CPDHS). The evening began with brief reports from our executive followed by Sandra Schaeppert who spoke for a few minutes about her experiences with the countertop composter that is being promoted and subsidized by the town.

CPDHS President Paul Pietsch shared an interesting 'show and tell' of how to plant tiny succulents in the crevices of craggy rocks. After to demo he showed us an example that he had planted sometime ago. The rock still had the original 'chicks' that he planted, which grew to be 'hens' which in turn provided many of their own 'chicks'. Several members said that they are going to give this a try.



Expert Panel Q & A

My note taking skills had a workout during the spirited question and answer session. Master Gardeners Helen Halpenny and Paul Pietsch handled one question after the other with their thorough horticultural knowledge and experience while making thoughtful recommendations and providing alternatives when appropriate. Only one question received a *"there is no reliable solution that we know of"*.

Here are some of the questions from members and guests, along with **paraphrased and abbreviated answers**. Hopefully I've gleaned an accurate account of the session.

Q: Do you believe in using leaves for mulch in a garden?

A: Yes. *It's best to mulch them with a lawn mower before putting them on the garden. They will have completely broken down into the garden by spring adding nutrients and tilth.*

Q: Will strawberries that are planted in a bucket survive our winter??

A: *Sink the pot into the ground until spring. If left above ground they will freeze and thaw repeatedly which will likely kill them.*

Q: Can I prune my Jackmanii Clematis back now??

A: Yes. *Jackmanii Clematis* can be cut back to within a foot of the ground now. That variety of clematis blooms on new wood so will benefit from the late autumn pruning. Other clematis types bloom on old wood. If you trim those now you will have no flowers next year. Oftentimes gardeners don't know the name of a variety of clematis that is growing in their gardens so are unsure of when to prune. A good rule of thumb is -- if they bloom in spring, don't cut them back until after they bloom. They are blooming on old wood. If your clematis blooms in summer, cut it back in autumn. Like the *Jackmanii*, it blooms on new wood..

Q: When do I prune my paniculata hydrangea.

A: The best time to prune is in late winter or very early spring before the bush begins to bud out. Trim back 25-30% of their length. This helps promotes new growth for blooms. The remaining old wood provides the plant with rigidity to help avoid drooping. Cut on the slant just above an outward facing bud. Remove dead, weak or crossing branches at the base of the plant. Pruning times for hydrangea differ based on variety. Check reference books or online for the process for the variety you are growing.

Q: What can I add to my soil to enrich it? I already add compost but I see other people adding bags of black soil. Is that necessary.

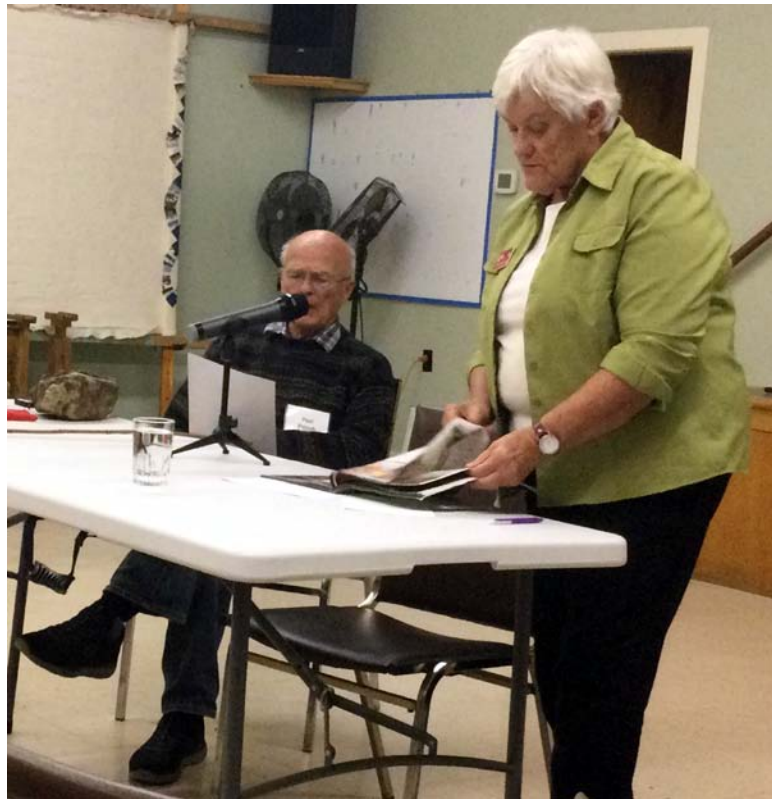
A: Use compost and manure to improve soil. Composted cow manure can go on anytime. Horse manure is considered 'hot'. It needs time to completely break down. Helen's mother got an early start on her tomatoes each year by digging a trench and filling it with horse manure. Garden soil went back on top of that into which tomato seedlings were planted. Horse manure provided early spring warmth from below. Bagged or bulk 'black soil' is not designed to enrich garden soil.

Q: I foolishly planted horse radish and now can't get rid of it. Help please.

A: Only way to get rid of it is to dig it up...all of it! Any tiny bit of root that remains will re-grow the horseradish. Some growers plant horseradish in containers to keep it from invading the garden.

Q: How far back do I trim my rose plants in the fall?

A: After a rose is in full dormancy, reduce leggy canes that will be damaged in winter winds down to the same height as the remainder of the bush. Prune above an outward facing bud. Do final pruning in the early spring to remove crossing, damaged, weak or dead wood. Pruning roses in August to October encourages new growth which reduces the plant's chance of surviving winter.



Q: How far back do I trim my Hibiscus tree that I bring inside. Should it be in the fall or spring or both?

A: *Cut it back by 1/3 when you bring it in. It will take on new growth and be in bloom by spring.*

Q: I'm new to Carleton Place but not new to gardening. Will rose bushes survive CP winters? How about climbers?

A: *CP is in zone 5a. That means that floribundas, grandiflora, tea roses and other tender roses will not survive most of our winters without significant protection. Tender climbing roses will have to be taken down, wrapped in burlap, laid down on the ground and covered with an insulating layer of leaves or mulch. There are several attractive re-blooming roses that are hardy here, some down to zone 3: Explores series, Morden Roses/Canadian Parkland Roses, and even several climbers [Google: 'hardy climbing roses'] grow well here.*

Q: Can you grow garlic in a deep pot?

A: *Growing plants in a pot makes them more susceptible to cold damage by one zone. With that said, some garlic is hardy to zone 2. To be safe it would be helpful to bury the pot into the ground for the winter so it does not suffer from freeze/thaw cycles.*

Q: How to start sweet peas, I have not had any luck planting them in a pot or the garden?

A: *Soak sweet pea seeds in warm water for at least one day before planting. Put the seed between wet paper towels and leave them there until they germinate. Then pot them up.*

Q: How do I get rid of the gout weed coming into my yard from my neighbor?

A: *Gout weed is very hard to eliminate or control. One solution is a really deep seamless physical barrier at the property line. If it has already crossed into your property, it is critical to get it all when pulling or digging out gout weed. Any small bit of root will create a new plant.*

Q: We have a 40 year old crab apple tree that has overgrown to about 24' tall. How much of the excess growth can I prune off each year to reach our goal of a 12-14' tall tree without killing it?

A: *No more than 25% reduction each year until the tree reaches the size and shape desired. After that, keep up with maintenance pruning.*

Q: How do I eliminate cherry black knot on my cherry tree??

A: *Black knot is in the environment. That means that you will attempt to control it rather than eliminate it. Cut off the branch that has the black knot on it. Make your cut a foot below the knot. If that doesn't work, then cut it off again when it reappears. There is no permanent cure. Most cherry trees eventually get black knot.*

Q: There is a 4'x 4' spot in one of our borders that is infected with verticillium wilt. We lost a peony, then an elderberry and finally a hydrangea before we realized what the problem was. What would you recommend we grow in that spot that is immune to verticillium wilt?

A: *Conifers and ornamental grasses are immune to verticillium wilt. Another solution is to excavate the infected area completely and remove the soil to a disposal site. Verticillium wilt is a fungal infection for which there is no cure or treatment for infected plants or soil.*

Q: How do I get rid of 'root mealy bugs' in the soil in all my house plants. I have tried soap and water (not successful). Tried Pyrethrum spray with no luck. One pot is huge, so soaking it would be difficult. Your ideas would be appreciated!

A: *This is the question that both of our Master Gardeners were stumped with. They were unaware of any effective treatment: "there is no reliable solution that we know of". One audience member suggested trying hot water... he had used it successfully in the past to eliminate persistent pests. He suggested a short immersion into 65 deg C water would kill the bugs. The plant he treated survived. 50 degree C water was not hot enough to eliminate the bugs.*

The panelists' depth of knowledge and willingness to share was appreciated by all. Great Job Helen and Paul!

Annual Photo Contest

The winning photographs from the CPDHS Annual Photo Contest were on display during the evening with the names of winners and judges comments included.

Congratulations and thanks to all participants for sharing their photos. It's never too begin thinking about which photos that you might include in the 2023 Annual Photo Contest.

On behalf of the members, we extend our thanks to Doreen Harris for organizing and coordinating another successful CPDHS event.





Door Prizes

Door prizes are always popular. Several packages of spring bulbs went over particularly well with door prize winners. Our guest speaker Helen Halpenny added to the haul by donating some bulbs from her garden.

My better half was the happy winner of some of Helen's allium bulbs. As those alliums bloom next spring, we will remember a fun and educational evening at the Carleton Place and District Horticultural Society.

