

The Garden Path

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HERB OF THE MONTH
By Edna (Ladybug) Lovelace Gaston



With the arrival of the enticing dream books (aka seed and garden catalogs) here's a suggestion for another herb theme garden for either a bed or containers – bee garden.

Definitely a container plant, unless you have room for it to roam, is Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*. In the hot summer the scent is so refreshing. Bees swarm to my plants when they are showing their beautiful white blossoms.

Another bee favorite in my garden is Roman Chamomile, *Chamaemelum nobile*. With its daisy-like blossoms and low growing habit, it's perfect as a border plant or the "spiller" for a container.

Some of our all-time favorites are great for our friendly pollinators – Sage (*Salvia*) including the traditional variety or the colorful purple, golden or tricolor, is a delightful addition. Next comes one, or several, of the lavenders (*Lavendula*) along with the great Rosemary (*Rosmarinus*) either upright or another spiller with Prostrate Rosemary. One or several of the many Thymes (*Thymus*) will add interest to any garden or container while providing delicate flowers for the bees. Who could resist Thyme varieites such as silver-edge, golden or wooly with its wonderful texture, and I could go on and on. Another great border or spiller plant.

One plant that is underused is Germander (*Teucrium chamaedrys*) also known as "poor man's boxwood" as it can be trained into a neat low growing border. And don't forget the many uses of Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*) which forms a nice shrub.

Buzz on down to your favorite store for some of these great plants!

Sincerely,
Ladybug

Checklist for March **By Mary Jane Bosworth**

March is one of the loveliest months to be outside in our area. Take advantage of the comfortable weather and get out and work in the garden.

- ❖ Before woody plants start to bloom do last minute pruning and apply dormant oil spray if necessary.
- ❖ Deadhead daffodils and pansies when blooms drop.
- ❖ Start warm season flowers like marigolds, zinnias and cosmos by direct seeding.
- ❖ Trim ornamental grasses close to the ground before new growth starts.
- ❖ Protect tender plants from late frosts.
- ❖ Apply pre-emergent herbicides to prevent spring weeds.
- ❖ Prune spring flowering shrubs after blooming. Cut out 1/3 of the canes to the ground each year to keep them looking good.
- ❖ Divide established perennials that are getting too large. Either start a new garden, fill in an older one or share your good fortune with a friend.

Tyro's Corner **By Eileen Novak**

There's an old adage: "if it seems too good to be true..." you know the rest. I have heard so many people remarking recently that this lovely spring weather (high seventies at the end of February!?!?!?) seems just too good to be true. It is. The black lining for this silver cloud of wonderful weather is the fact that if the bees are buzzing and the butterflies are flitting, there are other 6- and 8-legged creatures out there as well. And they're looking for a meal. To paraphrase Humphrey Bogart in Casablanca, "They're looking for you, kid".

Of course, the insects to which I am referring are the blood-sucking kinds. Mosquitos and ticks so far THIS YEAR have been sighted taking "donations" from my husband. I'm sure many veteran gardeners are aware that there's always some insect out there looking to spoil your picnic, but beginning gardeners are still probably in the Honeymoon Phase and believe in the intrinsic good of all creatures. Hah! The age-old question is: "why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes when he had the chance?" In order not to stir up any religious controversy, I'll leave that question unanswered.

But beware, beginning gardeners, there are insects out there already and the odds are, they'll get worse before the next deep freeze... Which might not arrive until next January.

Be on the lookout for the nastier arachnids: the ticks. Ticks are awful creatures. Not only do they drink your blood, they implant themselves in your skin till they are too heavy to hang on! Talk about parasites! They would be bad enough if they JUST drank your blood, but they have more dirty tricks in their repertoire! According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), ticks can also transmit certain diseases to people. For lots more information, including the complete list of unpronounceable diseases, visit www.cdc.gov/ticks. Keep in mind that for many tick-borne diseases, the infected tick must be attached to your body for several hours. Checking yourself shortly after visiting an area where you may encounter ticks, and promptly removing any ticks you find, is an effective strategy to reduce your risk.

Before you hang up your garden clogs and trowel and swear never to set foot outside again, know that there are ways to prevent ticks from making a meal of you. The simple expedient of wearing your pant legs tucked into your socks and your shirt tucked into your pants makes the tick have to

travel the entire length of your body up to your neck to find a place to bite. Spraying your clothes with an appropriate insect repellent makes the trip that much more distasteful for them. I have found that inexpensive “scrubs”, those plain cotton pants that medical people wear, work well in the heat of the summer so you don’t have to fear heat stroke from wearing long jeans in 95 degree weather.

Another nasty insect is the mosquito. This airborne menace not only bites, but if you have one in the house, they always find the bedroom, and you always stay awake at night listening to the whine of their engines as they zero in on a target: your skin! Mosquitoes can also transmit certain diseases to humans. Again, visit the Centers for Disease Control website for lots of helpful information (go to www.cdc.gov and type “mosquito” in the search box). Preventing a mosquito from biting you is a little trickier than keeping off the ticks but it can be done.

The CDC recommends several strategies to prevent them from breeding in the first place. Suggestions include: Remove, turn over, cover or store any equipment that may hold water (even a little!); remove debris from ditches, fill in areas that collect standing water, and place holes in containers that collect water and cannot be discarded. This will cut down on the number of hungry mosquitoes out for your blood. But also you should use insect repellent when you’re out and about.

For lots of helpful tips on the safe use of insect repellent, visit <http://go.ncsu.edu/bugoff>.

Beginning Gardeners, if I have frightened you... GOOD. But remember if you take the precautions above you should have fewer worries about contracting an unpronounceable disease and more fun in the garden.

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