

Brandon Garden Club 120th Anniversary

PRESIDENT DEANES MESSAGE

It is the beginning of another exciting year for our garden club; we begin tomorrow with being the host club for the 115th M.H.A. Convention. They have arranged a variety of speakers who will do demonstrations and speak of horticulture in Africa. If you are still interested in attending and have not registered you can pay for each day at the door. It would be \$12.00 for Thursday even-

ing, \$18.00 for Friday and \$18.00 for Saturday - this does NOT include the meals as they had to be prepaid. We are also celebrating our 120th Anniversary as the oldest garden club in Manitoba. Our membership has been growing and we continue to attract younger members,

who can take advantage of all the advice the long time members are willing to share.

I begin another year as your President which is a great honor that you put your trust in me to do the best I can for our club.

Gwen will be putting together another busy and interesting program with the help of the surveys you filled out.

Conferences For the Gardening Enthusiast:

There are two seasonal diversions that can ease the bite of any winter. One is a January thaw. The other is the seed catalogues.....
- Hal Borland

Manitoba Horticultural Association

115th Annual

Convention

January 17, 18 & 19, 2013

Sokol Hall 33 11th Street
North, Brandon, MB

We hope you will join us for an excellent program and the fellowship of meeting with other gardening enthusiasts.

2013 Growing Local Food

Conference

March 1 & 2, 2013

Marlborough Hotel 331 Smith
St., Winnipeg, MB

Presented by: Food Matters Mb

Offering a great lineup of workshops and displays.

Contact: (204) 943-0822 or 1-800 731-2638

Gardening Saturday

March 23, 2013

Canadian Mennonite University, North Campus,
500 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB

Keynote Speaker: Beckie Fox

Contact: (204) 895-2460

January Garden Tips



- In the event of snow, be sure to shake or brush off the white stuff from the branches of your evergreens and shrubs. The light fluffy snow poses no real threat, but if it should become wet and frozen, the weight dramatically increases. Branches are more brittle when the plants are dormant, and the weight of the snow may snap them off.
- Avoid walking over the same areas of your frozen lawn, or you may find bald spots in the spring
- Fireplace ashes should be saved to use as a fertilizer for your Iris and other alkaline soil plants.
- Closely inspect houseplants. Remove aphids from houseplants with a mixture of equal parts rubbing alcohol and water and add a drop of dishwashing detergent. Apply this to troubled plants with a soft brush.
- Check your houseplants: divide and re-pot any pot-bound plants. Prune judiciously to create compact, attractive specimens
- Houseplants-dust on the foliage can clog the leaf's pores; so clean them up a little with a damp cloth, or a quick shower under the tap. Actively growing plants will benefit from a shot of liquid plant food.
- On very cold nights, it is a good time to close the curtains or blinds between the window and your houseplants. Make certain that your plants have sufficient humidity, by setting them on a tray filled with clean pebbles, and a little water, or by simply setting a cup of water nearby.
- Keep holiday poinsettias in a sunny, cool location with high humidity.
- You can force Hyacinth, Paper white Narcissus, and Lily of the valley bulbs into bloom indoors, in a shallow bowl of water, or in pots this month. If you can't have spring yet.... fake it!
- Extra time this month might well be spent getting the garden tools ready for spring. Sharpen and oil tools such as shovels, shears, mowers and the like. Power tools such as weed eaters and power mowers may benefit from a good tune-up.
- It's not too early to begin to think of a strategy for new spring plantings. You might want to create a small map of your garden, and use it as a guide for ordering plants and seeds from the catalogs that are arriving in the mail.

Best Garden Tools...How Do You Know?



The phrase “best garden tools” is a bit subjective. If you’re a “gardener” only once a year when spring rolls around, then a less expensive tool from one of the big box stores might be “best” enough. On the other hand, if you’re an avid gardener that depends on your tools to work as hard as you, every time you pull them out of the shed, then you’re looking for a tool that is a bit more substantial...a garden tool built by gardeners for gardeners.

Today, far too many tool companies have to satisfy their stockholders and as a result, the tools are made less robust. It may be a cheaper grade of wood for a handle, some plastic incorporated or stamping the cheap steel a little thinner, but it all adds up to a poor quality, disposable tool and more dividends to the shareholders.

So, what makes for the “Best Garden Tools”? Well, one might think that as simple as the typical garden tool is, there wouldn’t be too much to it, but there’s more than meets the eye.

First of all, there’s the design. Better garden tool makers have been refining their designs for decades or even hundreds of years. A little more angle here, a little less there can make a big difference as to how the tool feels and performs. They tinker with the thickness of the steel so it’s heavy enough for its purpose, but not so heavy as to tire the gardener out. It may be a design change for the way we garden. Today, raised garden beds are popular and some tool makers are making mid-length tools that are easier to work in those smaller gardens. The list of tweaks that these tool makers have made over the years is long and for the better ones, it’s never ending.

Now let’s look at the metal used in garden tools. A tool of lesser quality has thin steel that comes from a large roll, cut to size, stamped to its final shape and counted as X number of units per minute versus X number of units per day for the better tool makers. The best garden tool makers have tinkered with their steel formulas to get the strongest steel available and start out as a block of steel before being heated and hand forged into its final shape.



Socket
Handle
Connection



Strapped
Handle
Connection



And now handles. Garden tool handles are notorious for breaking and most of the time it’s because of a poor attachment to the metal or crappy wood. Several manufacturers have gone to fiberglass handles and I’ll be the first to admit that they are very strong, but they don’t absorb the shock of using the tool as well as wood and because they are hollow, they must be glued into the head which is bad news if you ever have to replace the handle. For centuries, garden tool makers have tried different types of wood for handles and have come to the conclusion



One of the most important points of a quality garden tool is how the handle is attached. For spades and forks, this is especially important as they are the real work horses of gardening. Cheaper tools have thin steel that is just wrapped around the handle and riveted or has a tang that is shoved into a hole at the end of the handle...fast, but not very strong.



These best garden tools should have either a socket or a strapped connection. The strapped connection is by far the strongest. The head and straps are one piece of steel and the straps extend far up the handle where it is riveted. Almost as strong is the socket attachment. Here too, the head and socket are forged of a single piece of steel and the handle is fastened into the socket.



Last but certainly not least...the warranty. When was the last time you bought anything that had a lifetime warranty? Well, the best garden tools come with the best warranty...lifetime. These tools are made to be passed down for generations and are an investment. I read somewhere and is so true for good quality garden tools..."the quality will be remembered long after the price is forgotten".

The Brandon Garden Club meets at 7PM on the third Wednesday of each month except July and August at the Seniors for Seniors Complex at 311 Park Avenue East, Brandon.

New members always welcome. Annual membership is \$20 single / \$30 couple. Non-members are welcome to attend meetings to take advantage of the Club's horticulture programme at a cost of \$5.00 per meeting.

For more information on club affairs contact the club secretary, Nancy Lytle at 727-8912 or e-mail thebrandongardenclub@mymts.net.

The club newsletter is published free for members and is distributed at monthly meetings. Contact the editor, Shannon Brichon at 727-3581 for e-mail or postal delivery.