

# Hortiscopia

Carver County  
Horticultural Society  
(CCHS)

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**NEWSLETTER OF THE CARVER COUNTY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY, NOVEMBER, 2004**

**"In search of my mother's garden – I found my own." -- Alice Walker**

## The Accidental Plant Propagator

I've already mentioned (a hundred times) that I have a lot on my plate – too much to get everything done the way I would like. This includes housekeeping. Thankfully, Al's not as particular as some husbands might be. Or maybe he is, but he's also very polite, even to his wife. Anyway, I don't get to all my household chores as regularly as I should. A month ago I picked a great bouquet of fall blooming flowers – boltonia, asters, and sedum 'Autumn Joy.' They looked great in a vase on my dining room table. And they kept for a long time – longer than originally intended. Thankfully, boltonia, asters and sedum even look good as dried flowers. But a month was long enough. This weekend, when I noticed that there was less than an inch of water left in the vase, I finally decided to dispose of them. But when I took them to the sink and pulled them out of the vase, I discovered that every single stem of sedum 'Autumn Joy' had rooted – full, vigorous roots! And all along the lower part of the stem were new little leaves, desperately trying to regenerate. Now I had a dilemma. I couldn't throw these disaster survivors away! They were propagating their little hearts out. What gardener with a soul could turn her back? So I cut the stems down to about 5" and put them all in another glass of water – for the time being. I could literally put each stem in a small pot of soil, and I'd have two dozen new sedum 'Autumn Joy' plants next spring to sell at our plant sale (I'm always looking ahead) – assuming I had a greenhouse, or some place to keep them all winter. If I put them in the basement (the only place where there is room right now) they'll die from neglect. I've accidentally created yet another thing to do this winter!

### November To-Do List

- The best time to fertilize your lawn is from late October to mid-November, but only on unfrozen ground.
- Apply a 6-8" layer of winter mulch (shredded leaves, straw) to tender perennials AFTER the ground has frozen.
- Some research suggests that cutting down perennials should be left till spring. If you haven't done it yet, leave it.
- If you can still dig your soil, now would be a good time to take a soil sample and send it to the U of M for a soil analysis.
- Remember to continue to water trees and shrubs until the ground freezes.

### Cottage Garden

The strawberries we know today were bred from two American species of *Fragaria* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Today's varieties either fruit once in summer or continuously from summer to fall. The latter are known as perpetual or ever-bearing strawberries. Cottage gardeners usually grow strawberries in rows, protecting the delicate fruit from the soil by covering the ground with straw or special strawberry mats. They like a loose, fertile humus-rich soil and plenty of sun when the fruits are ripening. Strawberries are easy to grow in pots and barrels as well as in the open garden.

from Cottage Garden, A Journal, by Jackie Bennett



### Guide to Pronouncing Botanical Latin

We know that a plant may have many common names, and the only way to make sure we're talking about the same one is to use its botanical name. That's fine for reading and writing – but how to you avoid embarrassment by trying to pronounce botanical Latin names? Fine Gardening Magazine has a great resource for just that problem. Check it out online at the following link:

<http://www.taunton.com/finegardening/pages/spg017.asp>

*Carver County Horticultural Society (CCHS) is a non-profit organization founded to expand our members' knowledge and horticultural skills while promoting civic beauty, community involvement and conservation of natural resources.*

*Membership is open to all genders, ages and skill levels.*

## Garden of Weedin'

This column will highlight some common garden weeds -- what they look like, what they're called, and what you can do about them!

### Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*

Stinging nettle looks very much like a variety of mint – its stem is four-sided, and its leaves are soft and fuzzy. It can grow up to 2-4 feet tall, sending new shoots out from along its roots. It flowers in summer with greenish-white flower clusters, and also propagates from seed. If you grab this plant with your bare hands, you'll receive a jolting sting, the long-term reaction to which varies depending on people's range of sensitivity.

If you have a small infestation, you can pull offending plants, being careful to get all root segments (and wear gloves!). If you're not opposed to chemicals, you can always use a systemic herbicide, like Round Up.



## Another Online Tool

Here's a handy little computer tool many of you may not be familiar with – it's a link to a gardener's biggest concern – the weather.

Many of you may be familiar with the Weather Channel, and some may even know that they have their own web site. But there's weather, and then there's "garden weather."

If you click on [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com), you'll notice in the banner across the top, you need to put in your zip code for local weather. But don't ignore the box next to it that says, "See weather related to ...". Click the down arrow, and select "Lawn & Garden."

- rainfall totals, precipitation forecasts, and a daily indicator of whether your garden needs watering
- A garden care calendar, tailored to your area (again, triggered off your zip code)
- Planting and care guides for perennials, fruits, bulbs, herbs, trees/shrubs, and vegetables that grow in our Zone.
- Guide to controlling pests and diseases.

Get into this site, and do some exploring. You may want to bookmark it for next season!

## Fall or Spring Clean Up?

Many gardeners spend the fall cutting down their spent perennials, and cleaning up garden debris in the fall. I'm not one of those gardeners. I leave most garden clean-up chores for spring, and here's why:

1. I'm lazy. By the end of the season, I've had it with the garden. I just want to wind down, spend the winter relaxing, and come out ready to work again in spring.
2. Many of the seedheads of your declining plants provide food for the birds through the winter, such as coneflowers, rudbeckia, salvia, and others.
3. There is evidence to show that foliage left standing above ground actually acts to trap the snow around your plants, providing them with added insulation during winter.
4. If you don't mark your plant locations, you might not recall where things are planted in spring – unless you leave last season's debris in place to mark the spot. I usually don't cut down spent foliage in spring until I see new growth emerging. Then I know I won't try to plant a new purchase in real estate that's already occupied.

Notwithstanding the above, there are some clean-up duties that I do accomplish in fall:

1. Cut down and burn any mildewed or diseased foliage, usually on phlox, monarda, and asters.
2. Cut down iris foliage to 2-3" to prevent overwintering of iris borer.
3. Cut down any foliage that tends to get mushy over winter, such as hosta, lambs ears, & Silver Mound.
4. Cut down and dispose of ALL vegetable debris. Incorporate compost into next year's garden now.
5. Dig up and store summer bulbs, such as dahlias, gladiolas, and cannas.

**No meetings in December or January!**

Stay tuned for information on our next meeting on Monday, February 16.

**(Remember, in 2005 we'll be meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday!)**