

Hortiscopia

Carver County
Horticultural Society
(CCHS)

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CARVER COUNTY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY, OCTOBER, 2004

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

The end of summer got away from me, and this fall is already beginning as a blur. Having missed sending out a September newsletter, this October issue is also overdue – further evidence (as if I needed any) that I've over-committed myself once again. But Al & I did have a great weekend at the North Shore to celebrate our 5th wedding anniversary. We stayed in a log cabin at Cascade Lodge, just north of Lutsen, and got a sneak preview of fall foliage. Many have wondered whether the cool summer would produce more beautiful fall color, or less. The leaves were past their peak already, so I couldn't tell. We in the Twin Cities will just have to wait a little longer to find out.



While we were gone, the construction on our addition finally began (we had hoped to start last spring). By mid-November we should have a third garage stall to store all the lawn and garden equipment we've accumulated in the five years we've lived in Carver, so that our cars will no longer feel like unwelcome visitors in their own garage. Can't wait!

October To-Do List

- Time is past for seeding new lawns; wait until spring
- Plant spring flowering bulbs, such as tulips, daffodils, crocus & scilla
- Water your evergreen trees and shrubs from now until the ground freezes, and your deciduous trees and shrubs until they lose their leaves
- Pruning should wait until late March
- If you've been waiting to plant anything in pots, wait no more! Make sure they're in the ground by mid-October.
- Wrap smooth-barked trees with flexible plastic tubing; don't use paper wrap.
- Protection of young trees and shrubs from rabbits will require hardware cloth.
- Protect evergreens from winter wind and sun scald with a burlap screen.
- Buy the 2005 15th Anniversary Minnesota Gardening Calendar for yourself or for Christmas gifts (see Master Gardeners)
- Dig and store summer flowering bulbs (cannas, dahlias, gladiolas, etc.)

Cottage Garden

Although it is a vegetable, most people consider rhubarb to be a fruit. It wasn't until around 1800 that cottagers discovered, possibly by accident, that rhubarb made a delicious filling for tarts and pies. Until then, they grew it for medicinal purposes only. It is a vigorous plant and looks very impressive in a larger cottage garden. It is best grown in a separate bed at least 3 feet square, to prevent it from swamping other plants, but the colorful stems make it well worth the space it needs.

from *Cottage Garden, A Journal*, by Jackie Bennett

NOTE: Cut back rhubarb to the ground in fall, and mulch well with composted manure. Harvest in spring to early summer, but never more than 1/3 of the plant. In cool summers, as the one just past, rhubarb may be harvested all summer long.

Vanilla-Stewed Rhubarb

*1 pound rhubarb, sliced into
1-inch lengths*

*1 cup sugar
1/2 vanilla bean*

Put the rhubarb in a pot and add water just barely to cover, then add the sugar. Split the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape the seeds into the pot and drop in the rest of the bean. Bring to a boil and simmer over low heat until the rhubarb is tender, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.

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!

Quack grass *Elytrigia repens*

If you have open areas of hardpan soil, or soil that crusts over in dry weather, chances are you have quack grass. Quack grass is an aggressive perennial grass reproducing by seed, or spreading by a shallow mass of long, slender, branching rhizomes. It's a nuisance to lawns, ornamentals and home gardens. Because of the ability of broken rhizome segments to grow and produce new plants, it is extremely difficult to control.

If the infested area is small, hand pulling in moist soil is the best remedy. In large areas, it can be choked out by growing millet, soybeans, or two successive crops of rye.



Garden Surprises

You may have heard me say in the past that we are really not in control of our garden landscapes – they seem to have a mind of their own. Well, we got an unexpected surprise this year. At the back of our lot is a pile of garden debris – to call it a compost pile would be a compliment. That's where everything ends up – including last fall's pumpkins. Around mid-summer, I spied an unusually vigorous vine growing from the debris pile. A week later, it sported large, orange blossoms; it was then that I realized we had a volunteer pumpkin plant. We've been watching it grow and color up for fall. This year my fall decorations will include this welcome visitor.



Majoring on the "Minors"

Every gardener, from novice to expert, knows that now is the time to plant spring flowering bulbs, and the bulbs that spring first to mind are tulips and daffodils. But if your garden doesn't include the "minor bulbs" (grape hyacinths, scilla, Glory of the snow and snowdrops, for example), you're missing half the equation. These little darlings, like supporting actors in a movie, are meant to give a context to the major players – and often end up "stealing the show."

Grape hyacinths (muscaria) are among the most common of the minor bulbs. They come in blue, purple and white, and are wonderfully fragrant. They're easy to grow and multiply easily. But I recently discovered another important quality of muscari – they have viable foliage in the fall! Why is that important? If you plant muscari around your tulips and daffs, you'll never again lose track of where your major bulbs are planted. The muscari foliage will always tell you.



Siberian squill (*scilla siberica*) is a lesser known but wonderful little blue flower, that blooms in early spring and really sets off the major bulbs. The "siberica" in its name indicates its hardiness – to Zone 2!! In average, well-drained soil, they'll naturalize by shoots and self-seeding. Perfect for the front of a border, in a rock garden, or planted around trees, they'll take full sun to part shade.



Another blue beauty is **Glory of the Snow** (*chionodoxa*), a dainty light blue star-like bloom with a white center. Dress up your early spring beds with this naturalizer, and it will eventually form a light blue carpet that will disappear by late spring. Great for rock gardens, sunny woodland areas, or under deciduous trees.



And, lest you think all the minor players are blue, we have **Snowdrops** (*galanthus*), a hardy, low-maintenance bulb that blooms VERY early. Growing just 6-9" tall, it will naturalize in its proper setting. "Proper" means moist, humus-rich soil in cool, light shade.



If you're adding new bulbs to your gardens this fall, remember the "little things" that add depth and a little bit of whimsy to the tulip and daffodil display.

Don't miss our **November** meeting!

Topic: Thanksgiving centerpiece workshop
taught by Ardith Beverage
(date and location to be announced)