



Spruce Cottage Farm's

Periodic Newsletter

May 24th, 2014

Greetings Gardeners,

The busy time of spring; somehow the combination of greening leaves, hours upon hours of daylight and the birds singing creates a feeling in the air; a vibrancy and energy that allows us to take full advantage of our amazing Yukon spring. I've been getting so much work done (and it's a good thing too - there is an amazing amount of work to be done!)! The plants are thriving in this beautiful spring as well: the warm weather encourages growth and the slightly cool period is allowing them to develop hardiness too. Of course, the weather is doing the same thing for our lovely wildflowers and tenacious weeds! Now is a good time to consider mulching your garden to help smother the new growth of weeds and retain moisture in the soil. Mulching is simply applying a layer of organic matter (compost, aged manures or straw are a few examples) about 2 inches thick on the top of your garden. Mulches such as compost and aged manures can be direct seeded into - chunky mulches such as straw are best applied after transplanting or after seedlings have come up. Apply mulch around perennials, shrubs and trees, leaving the centre of the plant mulch-free.

As I start planting the gardens this season, I find myself referring to last season's garden notes frequently to aid me in planning crop rotations and deciding on planting quantities. The brief notes I wrote last year are very helpful in jogging my memory of last year's season. Last autumn (actually, it was probably December!), I went through my notes and added items (in a different coloured ink) that I wanted to change for this season - now when I look at last year's notes, the changes I wanted to make are easily apparent. Your garden notes can be as simple as a few sheets of paper attached to a clipboard and stapled together at the end of the season.

Next in my series of favourite plants is *Calendula officinalis*, sometimes called Pot Marigold due to its prevalence in medieval times as a cooking herb. This healing plant has been around since the 13th century and is considered today to be an essential plant in an herbalist's garden. The petals are edible and add a splash of colour to a salad or pilaf (it was used as a substitute for saffron, due to the bright yellow colour it adds to a cooked dish). It is an excellent skin herb, having very soothing and healing properties for cuts, scrapes and rashes. The petals are picked fresh and infused in oil. This oil is then used to make a healing salve. As well as being highly medicinal, it is very easy to grow! *Calendula* thrives in the garden or in a pot in full sun to part shade and blooms all summer until frost. It makes an excellent cut flower and a great plant to pop in here and there for some diversity in the vegetable garden. Deadheading encourages more blooms. While the flower itself is not fragrant, the foliage has a distinctive fragrance and is slightly sticky (I've observed it makes a great

sticky trap for small annoying bugs!). It is also great habitat for beneficial insects. Come find me at the Junction Community Market every Wednesday from 3pm-6pm (at the Log Church) if you'd like to try this lovely annual.

In growing harmony,

Jolene Billwiller

~ Gardening Maven ~



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