



MARCH/APRIL 2004

HEDGEHOG HILL FARM NEWS

SOLVING DEER PROBLEMS

Our garden, a three acre plot of land carved from the woods over three decades ago, is home to much fauna and flora. There are raccoons, skunks, toads, bluebirds and, of course, porcupines that visit our plot, gently traveling by the annuals, perennials, herbs, everlastings, and shrubs. However, there is one four-legged creature we are often sorry to see. Like many gardeners, we have worked for years to come up with ways to keep deer away. With their late night and early morning visits comes much destruction. Particularly vulnerable are such annuals as acroclonium, celosias and vegetables. Onions, leeks, and perennials, which we thought would be naturally resistant to deer, are also in danger. Several years ago, during a severe drought, the deer developed a taste for the plump ripe tomatoes. They now eat tomatoes with relish, figuratively speaking.

Over the years we have collected a compendium of remedies from books, friends, and customers. Here are some things we have tried. A mild dish washing soap, such as Ivory, is supposed to prevent deer from consuming yews and other woody perennials. Our yews, in particular, have had many a good soap dousing. We've hung Ivory bars from branches and lathered them with so much liquefied soap, they looked as if they've been in the shower. The results were not as dramatic. The deer ignored the soap and ate up the yews as if yews were appetizers. Mice ate the soap bars.

Human urine, men's, to be precise, is supposed to prevent deer from entering the garden. It can be sprinkled on tree trunks along the perimeter of a garden. This is the way that animals mark territory, why not humans? We used aged urine. We used fresh urine. Neither did the trick.



There are problems inherent in testing remedies to control wildlife. Whether a home remedy involves using a dangerous pesticide, not an option for us, or an organic method, the gardener is victim to the particular circumstances of weather, method of application, size of the animal population, absence or abundance of food. Other variables are the size of the sample tested and the length of the season. Finally, our conclusions, or how we "read" the effectiveness of a remedy, are based on the experiences of only a few gardeners.

We discovered our solution when we used fish emulsion initially as a foliar fertilizer. The deer would not touch plants that were sprayed. This is one home remedy, which, when applied often and at regular intervals, was effective. We used it on many plants, year in and year out, and under many weather conditions. In a garden sprayer, mix six ounces of fish emulsion (or fish emulsion with seaweed – both obtainable in any garden supply store); two gallons of water, and a few drops of Ivory dish-washing soap, to help the spray stick to the surface of the leaves. Agitate the mixture and then apply it with a fine spray to the plants. Evening is the best time to spray since the solution does not dry out before the deer come to feed. As an added precaution,

spray the underside of the plant leaves, where the emulsion will not wash off if it rains. After rain, re-apply. Though the process of application is time consuming, the mixture is neither costly nor toxic.

We do not know why this particular mixture is effective. Perhaps the deer are repelled by the smell of fish or animal decay. Though we have found that the spray repels deer for a couple of days, this regimen has to be followed diligently. Deer learn quickly when the spray has not been applied as their sense of smell is acute.

The good news is that when the spray is applied at frequent intervals, it repels deer from hostas, tomatoes (make sure you wash before eating), celosias, hollyhocks, yews, lilies, and other plants deer have been known to sample. Our hands-on empirical study is on-going, but so far, there have been no exceptions.

BARTER DAYS FOR MAY AND JUNE

Now in its sixth year, the barter program remains as popular as ever. Here are more dates available in May and June.

**Wednesday through Sunday
MAY 12 to MAY 16**

**Wednesday through Sunday
MAY 19 to MAY 23**

**Wednesday through Sunday
MAY 26 to MAY 30**

**Wednesday through Friday
JUNE 2 to JUNE 4**

**Wednesday through Friday
JUNE 9 to JUNE 11**

**Wednesday through Friday
JUNE 16 to JUNE 18**

**Thursday through Saturday
JUNE 24 to JUNE 26**

The work during these seven weeks will vary broadly, depending in large part on the weather. It may include greenhouse work, potting, garden maintenance, weeding, planting and mulching. Whatever the tasks, you will be working with a range of plant material and there will be time for discussions and questions. The exchange continues to be a day of your help on the farm in return for \$50 worth of plants. Days begin at 9:30, end at 4:30, with a break midday when everyone gathers for lunch and relaxation.

To register for the work crew, call or send an e-mail with day(s) requested, your name, address and telephone. If you want a space, act quickly as dates fill almost as soon as these newsletters are received.

FARM HOURS

The farm is open every day **except Monday**, from nine to five from mid-March until the 24th December. You may reach us during any of these open hours by phone and correspond with us anytime through our e-mail address. You will always find information about workshops, lectures and special events on our web site. Bring your family or friends to picnic at Hedgehog Hill. There are two beautiful grape arbors, lovely extensive gardens, and lots of peace and quiet.

DEADLINE: APRIL 1

A brief reminder that April 1 is fast approaching. If you haven't yet sent us your early plant order, it's time to dig out the Plant Catalogue. Early order prices are significantly lower than the full May plant prices. An early order will assure that we reserve your plants at the best price. It will also allow us to anticipate what we should seed, transplant, and dig before the Spring Fair beginning on Friday, May 7.

WORKSHOPS IN MAY AND JUNE



MAKING GARDEN CONTAINERS

Saturday, June 5
Saturday, June 19

For the past several years we have offered this unique workshop on making your own garden containers from simple materials that include peat moss, cement, fibermesh and water. These beautiful stone-like pots are durable, easy to fashion and can be designed into a number of unique shapes. They are often referred to as hypertufa pots, and they originated in England. These pots have been featured in a number of publications, including *Horticulture* magazine, *The Herb Companion*, and Jim Wilson's book on container gardening.

The day-long workshop is great fun. Of all the classes we have taught at the farm, this one is guaranteed to bring the most laughter, get you the dirtiest, and let you end the day with the satisfaction of having made a collection of unusual and usable garden containers. We will provide all the materials necessary, the forms for designing, and the space to cure the pots when finished. Each person will have ample time to finish at least a couple of pots during the workshop.

During the class we will direct the production work and intersperse the crafting time with some ideas on container garden design, plant choices, and soil and maintenance ideas. We will also give each of you enough plant material to fill one of your containers.

The workshop is taught by members of the staff at Hedgehog Hill. We have all made and continue to use hypertufa pots in our gardens, and we're certain that you will be pleased with your own results. This class is very popular, so we advise that you sign up early.

WORKSHOP DETAILS

COSTS: \$45.00 per person. The cost includes the class and a light lunch.

CLASS TIMES: 9:30 until 2:30.

WHAT TO BRING: Wear old work clothes and bring a couple of pairs of sturdy kitchen-style rubber gloves.

CLASS SIZE: 15 people per class.

REGISTRATION: Use the form below to register in person, by phone, by mail, or by e-mail.

GARDENING WITH PERENNIALS

Saturday, May 29

This day-long class will focus on working with herbaceous perennials. Using the many display gardens at Hedgehog Hill, the lecturers will discuss and demonstrate how to assess and plan a garden site, how to choose plants, design a garden, and care for and maintain that site over time. The talks will include information on periodicity of bloom, plant characteristics, design principles, color themes, and soil and site requirements, dividing plants, refurbishing areas, and identifying common plant diseases. Since we are an organic farm, we will also offer simple but effective solutions for dealing with plant diseases and predation. There will be ample time for questions and answers from participants and an actual site-planning exercise where everyone can participate in the development of a perennial garden design.

We have found over the years that this class is a wonderful place for both beginners and experienced gardeners to learn and exchange ideas.

GARDENING WITH HERBS

Saturday, June 12

Herb gardening and perennial gardening can sometimes be synonymous, as many of our favorite perennials such as baptisias, artemisias, and digitalis are at home in either category. Herb gardening can also be defined as gardening with edible plants, which are either annuals, biennials, or perennials. Herb gardens can be designed for fragrance, for ornamental interest, for medicinal use, or historical significance. Herbs may also be included in either the annual or perennial borders.

The purpose of this class will be to expand your notion of gardening with herbs, to discuss everything from the better known kitchen herb gardens to using herbs in many beds, borders, walkways, and containers. The farm grows hundreds of varieties of herbs and has display beds where participants can see, touch, smell, and sometimes taste various plants. Discussions will cover plant identification, cultural requirements, site design, soil and maintenance needs, harvesting techniques, and plant uses other than as garden ornamentals. We will focus on herbs for outdoor gardens, and also talk about those wonderful species that we can enjoy outdoors in the summer and inside from fall to spring.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____
TELEPHONE/E-MAIL _____
DATE OF WORKSHOP _____
Remember to include the fee by check or charge (Visa, AMEX, Discover, or MasterCard).
Card # _____
Expiration Date _____

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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HEDGEHOG HILL FARM
54 Hedgehog Hill Road
Sumner, Maine 04292
(207) 388-2341
Website: www.HedgehogHillFarm.com
E-mail: gardens@hedgehoghillfarm.com

DIRECTIONS:
From the Maine Turnpike: Exit 12 Auburn to Rt. 4 North, to Rt. 117 South to Buckfield
From Augusta: Rt. 202 to Winthrop, Rt. 133 to Wayne, Rt. 219 to Sumner
From Norway/S. Paris: Rt. 117 to Buckfield
Signs in Sumner and Buckfield to the Farm.