



“BOOYAH! As I’m writing this it’s like 12 degrees outside - even the thermometer has goosebumps! So, to keep warm I’m thinking about springtime and gardening.

Planting seeds indoors is amazingly easy, so it lets you get a jump-start on your garden. As we await the arrival of seed catalogs and for seeds to appear in the garden center, might as well prepare ahead of time so we’re ready.

Some basic supplies you’ll need:

CONTAINERS

You can go green and recycle many containers for seedlings. Be sure they have drainage holes and wash them in a 10/1 bleach solution before planting.

Some good choices include egg cartons, milk cartons cut in half, peat pots, shallow aluminum-foil trays, plastic pots or flats, and yogurt cups or margarine tubs.

SOIL

At La Crosse Floral, our Special Mix soil is lightweight and steam-sterilized, so there’s no risk of soil-borne diseases. We also carry Fox Farm soils - Ocean Forest contains naturally rich ingredients providing an excellent environment for seedlings to “grow big or go home!”

Happy Frog contains mycorrhizae fungi to stimulate root growth, and hurric acid to increase nutrient uptake.

LABELS

Don’t forget to label those seeds-believe me, you won’t remember what is planted where. Wooden sticks (popsicle sticks work fine), plastic pot labels, white adhesive computer labels, or simply marking pots with an indelible marker. All work well.

SPRAY BOTTLE & WATERING CAN

Check out our two types of small watering cans perfect for seeds and house plants as well.

While you’re waiting for seeds...

*Prepare a spot to grow them

Find a place that is warm and draft-free. Tops of cabinets, dressers, radiators, even the top of the fridge are good options. If you have curious kitties like I do, anything within their reach becomes a kitty smorgasbord or play area, so I grow seeds in a spare room with the door shut!

*Provide sufficient light

Seedlings need about 14 hours of light per day to sprout. Sunlight may not be enough, so artificial light will be needed. A grow light or fluorescent light with a timer attached (department stores have timers for around \$5.00) will help you regulate the hours needed to make your babies grow.

Time to start planting!

Begin with slightly damp soil and fill your containers about ¾ full. Push the soil down so it’s flat and level. Read the seed packs for info on how deep to sow, etc., and keep empty packs so you can refer to them later.

After planting, cover seeds loosely with plastic wrap. This holds in humidity and keeps your little darlings warm. Check daily to make sure the planting mix doesn’t dry out.

Once they sprout and the first set of true leaves appear, snip weaklings right at the soil level. Sounds like tough love, but it helps the survivors get better circulation and nutrition.

As the plants grow bigger, water from above with your spray bottle. The plastic cover can be shifted on and off for ventilation and eventually removed.

As plants get taller, fertilize seedlings after they germinate, about every two weeks or so. Use a diluted flowering houseplant fertilizer (about ½ strength of the recommended dosage).

In late spring it’s time to “harden-off” your babies for life outdoors. Bring them outside to a sheltered spot out of the sun. After a few hours, bring them back inside. Over the course of two weeks increase their time outdoors while also introducing them to sunnier locales.



Peace out, take root, and grow on!

Are you ready for the Color of the Year for 2012? Pantone has announced Pantone 17-1463 Tangerine Tango as the color of the year for 2012. Tangerine Tango is described as a spirited reddish orange that is both dramatic and seductive at the same time. With the popularity of such TV shows as “Dancing With The Stars” and “So You Think You Can Dance” - it is hard not to imagine this vivacious shading like a sunset. Over the past several years, orange has grown in popularity and acceptance among both Designers and Consumers. Tangerine Tango is especially appealing in men’s and women’s fashions. Designers such as Tommy Hilfiger, Elie Tahari, and Adrienne Vittadini, are incorporating this attractive orange into their spring collections.

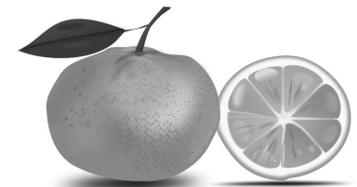
So, how does this Color of the Year play out in the Garden? If last year was any indication of your thirst for the color orange, this upcoming spring will be a blowout. Our most popular petunia was “Potunia Papaya”. It not only sold out as a single solid colored hanging basket, it also was snatched up to use in your combo pots with such plants as the lime green sweet potato vine, or with chocolate black coleus. Of course, we will have plenty of Papayas for you. There are lots of new tangerine varieties of plants you are already familiar with and probably even very comfortable growing such as a petunia.

We grew a few of the “Sweetunias” last year to trial them and possibly expand our offerings. There is an “Orange Flash” Sweetunia that we will pair with “Black Satin” Sweetunia that will absolutely make the tangerine color pop. Most folks are quite comfortable with Marigolds - this year you’ll have to try Sunburst Orange Splash. I am a HUGE fan of Gerbera Daisies. This year we are growing one called Jaguar Tangerine - sounds like you need to pair it with a Mai Tai and some Cheetos. As long as we’re talking about food - how about Sweet Potato Vine

“Re-fried Beans”.

“Re-fried Beans” is from a newer plant hybridizer for us -- Hort Couture. I am simply thrilled with some of their selections. Yo quiero ... Ipomea Chihauhua? Ipomea is the botanical name for a sweet potato vine. Chihauhua is a variety that is lime green - like the hugely popular Marguerite - yet is for more compact spaces. Re-fried Beans is also a member of this compact little family. Also exciting from Hort Couture are the “Under the Sea Coleus”. These coleus have a unique “crustacean” look that makes them irresistible. They are fun, durable, and exotic! We will offer Bone Fish and Hermit Crab. Keep in mind that we grow all of these for you.

In spring of 2011, we also quickly SOLD OUT of a Begonia Hanging basket, Encanto Falls Orange. Is La Crosse ahead of the curve in color trend? I tend to think not - but I do know that most of us love living in this beautiful part of the world. I think Tangerine Tango is a color we see when we travel to warmer destinations in our frigid winter months (it is 5 degrees when I am writing this column). Tangerine Tango is a “friendly” color - how can you not smile when you think of this color? If the color orange is too bold for your plantings, spice things up a little with some tangerine place mats, or melamine tableware at your outdoor entertaining this summer. We will always have Dramm gardening tools in this primary color. Be bold - don’t be afraid to Tangerine Tango this summer.



Garden Glossary

Node~It sounds so scientific, but simply put, it’s where a leaf emerges from a stem. If you can find a node, you can deadhead like a pro.

Cultivar~This is a variation of a species that has been selected for its unique characteristics, cultivated and named.

LA CROSSE
FLORAL

2900 Floral Lane
 La Crosse, WI 54601

“The GIANT Greenhouse by the Bluffs”

Website: lacrossefloralshop.com
lacrossefloral.net

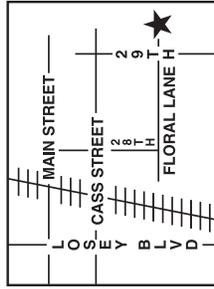
E-mail: LindaZ@lacrossefloral.net

Phone: 608-784-7500

608-785-SEED (785-7333)

800-658-9096

Fax: 608-784-8603



HOURS

Mon - Fri 8:00am - 5:30pm
 Sat 8:00am - 5:00pm
 Sun CLOSED

SPECIAL HOURS FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

Sun, Feb 12th Noon - 5pm
 Mon, Feb 13th 8Am - 6:30pm



Become a "fan" of La Crosse Floral on Facebook

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Roots and Shoots

Vol. 20, No. 5 Jan / Feb / March 2012



LA CROSSE
FLORAL

Theme Days

WINTER IS A BEAR *Fri. Jan. 13th - Sat. Jan. 21st*
 Who doesn't love bears?! They're so cute, warm, and fuzzy. Warm and toasty greenhouses mean you can save 30% OFF our Houseplants. We always have ways to wrap your plants so they make it home safe and sound! Don't let the temps outside scare you. It is warm and humid on our Plant Patio, plus - the Floral Gift Shop is starting to show signs of spring. Bring in your own Teddy Bear or buy one from us to save an additional 10%!



VALENTINE'S DAY *Tues. Feb. 14th*

As we "go to press" we are contemplating being open on Sunday, Feb. 12th, in the afternoon for those wanting to select their gift ahead of the holiday, which just happens to fall on a business day - Tuesday!



FREE RE-POTTING DAY *Sat. Mar. 24th / 8am - 4pm*
 Mark your calendars now! This immensely popular day is BUSY BUSY. If it is still a little cold out, cover your plant. We will re-pot, FREE soil and labor---one plant up to a 12" diameter, per customer. You may bring in a pot of your own, or purchase a pot from us. We will also have Houseplants on Sale this day. Maybe you simply need advice-We're Here:~)!

Dr. Greenthumb

In September, I was blessed to travel to Ireland with the Little Sprout. Much to my liking, the more northern parts of the country reminded me of Iceland. Lots of green moss, rocks, and waterfalls - also one lane roads! The Irish rains are over-rated. The sporadic light drizzle did not interrupt my photography for more than fifteen minutes in two weeks. I was fascinated by the old 500-1000 year old castles covered with ivy. The roadsides were closed in by ten-foot high hedges of fuchsia imported from Chile in the 19th century. Pink heather grew everywhere.

On the north coast was an exhilarating rope bridge challenge. Spanning a chasm more than eighty feet above crashing surf, it linked an island to the mainland. Near at hand was the Giants Causeway. The site

is composed of 40,000 regular shaped basalt columns packed closely together as if to form a stepping stone pathway out to sea. They were formed by the cooling and shrinking of molten lava from a volcano eruption 60 million years ago.

As a florist, one of the most interesting highlights I found, were the gardens at Kylemore Abbey. It is the largest walled garden in Ireland. Covering six acres, it primarily has plants and flowers that were imported to Ireland before 1900. At one time it had 21 glass houses growing bananas, melons, grapes, figs, and other fruit. Three giant trees (40' feet high) of Cordyline austriacs, (similar to our Draceana houseplants), are the focal points in the garden. Beautiful!

DID YOU KNOW...

In Kennett Square, PA., the Living Wall at Longwood Gardens is a panel wall system that encompasses 4,072 square feet and supports more than 47,000 plants!

Ferns, such as rabbit's foot fern, asparagus fern, evergreen holly fern, maiden hair, and button ferns, account for the majority of the 25 plant species at the Living Wall.)

GROWER TO GROWER

What is gardening? It's a love of soil, a love of plants, a love of playing in the mud and not getting yelled at for it. It can be hard labor for weeks, months, or even years. Despite all the work, there's bound to be some really useful stuff that you could use to help make things easier. I hope these few ideas will aid you in making the hard labor more of a playtime in the yard.

1) Know your property. How your yard is oriented determines how much sun or shade each side gets. This will affect your plant selection. You will have better success with your plants if you know your really sunny hot areas and your cool shady areas.

2) Manage your water during dry spells. Do not over fertilize your plants. More fertilizer produces more leaves, which in turn use more water. Try to aerate compacted soils. This allows more water to soak deeper into the ground and promotes deep root growth. Water longer but less often. Water will soak deeper into the soil and to the root zone.

3) Properly space plants. It may be tempting to cram plants together for instant gratification, but gardening is all about patience. If you give your plants room to grow, they will reward you with lush, healthy growth in the long run.

4) For all of you growers of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants, avoid blossom-end rot - that brown soft spot on the bottom of your fruit. To see this at the end of fruit really makes it hard to want to continue growing these. It is a result of low levels of calcium brought on by stress or sudden rapid growth.

Consistent watering is the cure. Plants need an inch of water per week for proper growth and development. Epsom salts soon after planting will help.

5) Choose and apply fertilizer. Choices abound at the garden centers and they are not all created equal. Know what you're trying to achieve with the fertilizer. Do you want greener grass, bigger veggies, or more flowers. Follow the application rates because the more -is -better approach will end up ruining your soil or your plants.

6) Build soil fertility. Plants are only as healthy as the soil they grow in, so fertile soil is a must for successful gardening. Allow natural materials, like compost and leaf mold to add nutrients and organic matter to your soil.

7) Deadhead your plants. Cut off seed heads and spent blooms. This will prevent your plants from going to seed too quickly. In most cases, it will help your plants bush out and force the plants into a second round of blooms.

I hope this short list of ideas will prompt some thought on your part. It may even save you some money and time.

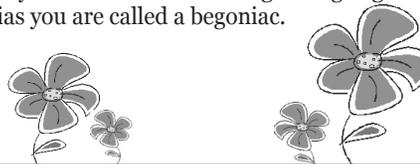
TOP 10 -- OR SHOULD I SAY "13" LIST

IN CASE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT PLANTS ARE POPULAR ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD - HERE ARE THE TOP 13 DANISH ORNAMENTAL PLANTS BASED ON SALES - IN ORDER...

1. KALANCHOE
2. ROSE
3. CAMPANULA
4. HEDERA (IVY)
5. NARCISSUS (DAFFODIL)
6. EUPHORBIA (POINSETTIA)
7. PHALEONOPSIS
8. OSTEOSPERMUM
9. ASTER
10. SCHLUMBERGERA (HOLIDAY CACTUS)
11. CYCLAMEN
12. CHRYSANTHEMUM
13. HIBISCUS

Flower Facts

The number of Begonia hybrids is estimated between 1500 and 2000. Within this enormous family there are plants which are tiny enough to grow in an egg shell and others which can cover a greenhouse wall. If you become addicted to growing begonias you are called a begoniac.



The Little Sprout



I'm always curious as to how many of our customers are computer connected. Do you know about our websites?

Notice - I said websites - plural. We have always had our e-commerce website of www.lacrossefloralshop.com, however, we have recently launched our own more comprehensive website at www.lacrossefloral.net. At this website, you can still navigate away to purchase flowers right from our homepage. There is so much more to us than our "shopping" site. While ever-changing at www.lacrossefloral.net, you will find some photo galleries in addition to some plant care info sheets! We are also starting to archive our Newsletter which we write four times a year. By the end of 2012, we are hoping to have shifted the majority of our 3,000+ readers to our website to read what is upcoming, new, or just plain interesting.

You may wonder "Why the change?" I have to admit that part of me wants to be more green-after all, this is the Floriculture Industry, and just as we work to recycle plastic pots, I also want to use less PAPER! We have printed our Newsletter on recycled paper with soy inks for years - even before it was the trend to do so. I realize that you have to recycle our paper newsletter, too. I look at the cost of postage and whether or not we will have a Post Office in La Crosse in the future. Will mail delivery of our Roots and Shoots be timely? I think there are a lot of unknowns.

With the new website, those of you with Smart Phones have the capability of fast page downloads. We realize how many of you use your phone now for just about everything. What would my Grandpa Hans think of all this? Well - I know he would still want to make sure I offered a printed version at our Sales Counters for those of you who desire a tactile experience. Over the years I have come across copies of "Flowery Talks", which my grandpa sent out. This was billed as "A monthly bulletin for flower lovers". I have some copies from the 1950's even. This was a 3x5" pamphlet of about 7 pages filled with seasonal flower information and even poetry. La Crosse Floral used to send these in the mail with statements. Nowadays, most of you use credit or debit cards for purchases (we send out very few statements). My, how the times have changed. I

was born in January of 1962. This is an excerpt from the February 1962 Flowery Talks - "with respect to Valentine's Day, have you yet learned the lesson Thomas Moore put into verse so many years ago?

Yet no - not words, for they
But half can tell love's feeling.
Sweet flowers alone can say
What passion fears revealing.

Let me know what you think of our transition from paper copies of our Newsletter to the electronic version on www.lacrossefloral.net. Email me at LindaZ@lacrossefloral.net

In the meantime, check us out on Facebook. We would love it if you "like" us.

BUFFALO CHICKEN DIP



I found a recipe in a Delta Airlines Sky Magazine in September on my way to Ireland. It is perfect for taking to the Super Bowl Parties. Just bake in a disposable foil pan. This dip is medium hot - adjust amount of hot sauce to your preference. Keep the blue cheese dressing full fat - I like Lite House brand.

2~8 oz. pkgs cream cheese
1~8 oz blue cheese dressing
1~12 oz bottle Frank's Red Hot Sauce (I'm a wimp-I use 1/2)
2 cups cooked chicken breast, shredded
2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix together ALL except shredded cheddar. Spread in a 9x9" pan (I use a 13x9" and it's fine). Sprinkle with shredded cheddar. Bake for 20-30 minutes until warm and oozy. Serve warm with Triscuits, Rice Crisps, Frito Scoops, Tostitos, Celery - whatever crispy thing you want. YUM!

BARB'S BLOOMS



I see many people coming into our shop with questions about certain flowers and when they are available. Can I get this flower next May for my wedding? Is it difficult to find that flower in December?

Well, I'll tell you - we can find almost every flower you might want. I say almost because I was just asked a couple of weeks ago if I could get Poppies in before Christmas, and unfortunately, I couldn't. Of course, everything has its season.

I take pride in my job, and the fact that I have several suppliers that I can depend on and work closely with. Once I've established a good relationship with my representatives, I feel a trust with them and they with me. I've learned that working with several suppliers (and not just one) I may be able to get certain flowers from one when I couldn't from another. They all try very hard to please me and get what I need.

I can order Tulips and Hydrangeas in December...heather, waxflower, solidago...any time of the year. We just received a bunch of Jackpot Thistle which is used a lot in the fall, but it looks phenomenal right now.

I ordered white hydrangeas last week and they look fabulous! We keep hydrangeas in stock all through the year. Pink, citrus green, and lavender hydrangeas make beautiful spring and summer bouquets, and in the fall... sage green, burgundy, rust, etc. White for Christmas and wedding bouquets (Cindy loves working with these for wedding bouquets and table arrangements).

Orchids - another flower you would think of as seasonal - we usually have the dendrobium orchid on hand all year long for those requested tropical bouquets. The cymbidium orchids are gorgeous in Christmas designs, and again, any orchid for summer weddings.

Daisies - daisies - daisies ---- any time of the year...white, lavender, yellow! In fall, colorful oranges, plums, bronzes! At Christmas, the white cushion and the snowflake poms are quite popular.

Alstroemeria - any color - any time, and this lasts a super long time.

Carnations - Really- what do you think? I feel sad for the carnation...it seems to get a bad rap! The carnation is a very striking flower which grows in too numerous of colors to mention, and is probably the longest lasting flower I know of. So for these two reasons alone, I don't understand why more

people don't like it. Besides the fact that it is a very inexpensive flower! Let me see -- any color I want, any time of the year I want, long-lasting, and inexpensive? What's not to like?

A rose is a rose is a rose.... Another flower I can get for you in practically any color imaginable. Roses are a very meaningful flower as we all know - come Valentine's Day - we go through thousands. The rose is also a long-lasting flower in certain varieties. Some may have a smaller head, and some may blossom quickly, but even though they may blossom wide open...they will last awhile longer, so don't toss them when they open up.

The popular Red Freedom Rose has a long life span and is the most common in floral shops because of this. We have other favorites such as the Velvet Merlot, Black Bacarra, and Opium, which are all red in color. Each variety has it's own special reason for being a favorite of ours.

Colored roses tend to have a shorter life span, but are certainly just as beautiful. Like I said before, just cuz they open up wide--doesn't mean it's time to toss them.

Lilies - oh the sweet lily. From the asiatic to the oriental...any time of the year!

Asiatics have a smaller bloom and generally have no fragrance. Oriental lilies have a larger bloom and have a mild to strong fragrance. The Stargazer is a beauty with rich burgundy colors coming from the center of the flower up into its white petals and has a very strong fragrance. The white oriental such as the Casablanca - which is my very favorite - is white as white can be and gives off a subtle, softer fragrance.

Flowers are my business and I love learning about all the varieties. I'm sure I learn something new each day and could devote the entire newsletter to flowers, but maybe I'll write a second segment in the next one.

The next time you're in the shop, feel free to ask if we have "your" favorite flower in stock, and let me know if there is a particular topic you'd like me to write about...email me at laxfloral@gmail.com

