

Hamlen's Helping Hand

Welcome to Hamlen's Helping Hand!

This is our Spring newsletter, the first newsletter of 2004. We look forward to seeing you at the garden center.



Hamlen's Garden Center
157 St. Albans Road
Swanton, Vermont

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The Herbal World Immune Booster

Echinacea is on the top five selling list for herbal medicines sold in North America. It has strong antibiotic, antiseptic, and digestive properties. One of the greatest strengths of the herb is that it acts as a preventative medicine, offering resistance to infection and disease. Echinacea is the world immune booster.



The word 'Echinacea' is thought to come from the Greek word "Echinus" meaning hedgehog, which describes the prickly cone-like center. The Plains Indians used it for toothaches, sore throats, infections, wounds, snake bites, skin problems, as well as mumps, measles, smallpox, and cancer. When these illnesses would appear, they would suck on the piece of root. Since 1930, over 300 scientific articles have been written on Echinacea. No toxicity or severe side effects have been noted. Do not take it if you have tuberculosis, MS, HIV, Lupus, or any collagen disease.

The herb is so popular, that there is concern that this once prolific herb will be an endangered species because of over-harvesting. It is now on the U.S. Plant Savers primary list, and should not be taken from its wild setting. *E. leavigata* and *E. tennesseensis* are listed as endangered plants by the U.S. government. Growing it for yourself or buying it from health food stores are the best sources for the plant. there are 3 main species that are used for harvesting: *Echinacea purpurea*, *E. pallida*, and *E. angustifolia*.



Harvest the roots in the fall after the plant has gone to seed and after there has been a couple of good, hard frosts. Wait for 2 years after division planting, and 3 years from seed. Use a sharp knife to make a clean cut from the root. Leave enough rootstock so that the plant can continue to grow. Replant and harvest each year. Cut any root that is more than 1" in diameter into smaller pieces. This will avoid molds from growing.

Wash roots thoroughly and pat dry. Lay on a screen in a well ventilated area and allow to dry. It may take up to 3-4 weeks before completely dry. Keep out of direct sunlight. Store in glass jars in a cool, dry location. The roots will store for up to 1 year.

Tinctures

A tincture is like a very strong concentrated tea. Powder the dried herb in a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle. Put the herb in a wide mouthed jar. The herb should make up about 1/2 of the total volume that is in the jar. Immerse the herb in a liquid. Vodka or brandy are preferred by many herbalists, but glycerin or

apple cider vinegar can also be used. Remove any air bubbles by running a knife around the inside of the jar. Seal and store in a dark, cool place for 3-6 weeks, shaking occasionally. Strain the liquid and decant into smaller dark bottles. Cheese cloth works well as a strainer. Store in a dark, cool place. The tincture can last up to 5 years.

Making a decoction

Using the dried herb, combine 2 teaspoons of dried root and 1 cup of water in a sauce pan. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for at least 20 minutes. Strain and enjoy.

An infusion

To infuse a cup of tea, you can use the leaves, flowers, or seeds. Put 2-4 teaspoonfuls of fresh herb in a teapot. Pour 1 cup of boiling water into the pot. Allow to steep for at least 15-20 minutes. Strain and enjoy.

Inviting Butterflies to Your Garden

Fields of grassy meadows have been taken over by shopping malls and parking lots. Sadly, butterflies are becoming more and more rare these days. They are fragile insects that need help for their survival. The miss use of backyard pesticides is largely to blame for the disappearance of butterflies. To help preserve them, you can plant a special garden to feed and nurture them.



A butterfly garden should have at least 6 hours of sun. This is because butterflies need to raise their body temperature in order to fly. They perch on flowers basking in the sun, absorbing the solar benefits until their body temperature reaches 86-104 degrees F. Most of the plants that they love are also sun lovers.

There are 2 kinds of butterfly flowers: food plants for the caterpillar, and nectar plants for the adults. A way to help native butterfly species boost their population is to grow known food or host plants for those species. If using a host plant, make sure that you leave the plants intact when the growing season is over. You may destroy hibernating adult butterflies, their pupae, or their eggs. Colors of the flowers can also be an attractant. Purple, pink, yellow, and white are the colors most often preferred by butterflies. Mass planting of specific flowers is more effective than using single plants. Plant at least 3 groups of plants flowering at different times and mix together host plants and nectar flowers. Do not keep them separate.

Flowers that attract butterflies

Perennial flowers that attract butterflies are: coneflower, aster, beebalm, black-eyed susan, violet, and gayfeather. Cosmos, marigold, impatiens, heliotrope, and sunflower are annuals that work well. Herbs are also great nectar plants.

For a complete listing of host plants and nectar plants, come see us at Hamlen's Garden Center and we would be more than happy to help you choose the right plants for your butterfly garden.

Decorating the Outside of Your House

Window boxes add a personal touch and set a tone for the character of the house. Boxes help trim and finish the outside of the home. Type, style, color, location, and season should be considered when making your decisions.

Accessibility to the window box is very important. Most boxes should be checked on a daily basis. Make sure that the boxes have good drainage holes. Water buildup can rot the plants and make the boxes too heavy.



Type and style are mostly determined by the type of architecture and the amount of money you would like to spend. Formal plantings are symmetrical and orderly. Informal plantings are mixed with all different types, colors, and sizes of plants.

Tropicals are not limited to indoors. They have wonderful foliage and texture. Herbs add interest and can also be used for cooking. Vines and delicate vining flowers, overgrown and hanging, add charm and beauty.

Colors can be monochromatic or multi-colored. Monochromatic is generally 1 or 2 different colors with different tones of the color used. The way colors are displayed can create movement within the window box. Bolder,

brighter colors will be stronger and attract more attention. Light colors like pinks and blues will look cool and have a softening affect.

Sun or shade location will tell you what type of plants to choose for the boxes. The more shade, the more delicate the plants can be. Varieties that work well in shade are: violet, begonia, coleus, ivy, fuchsia, and impatien. Varieties that work well in sun are geranium, petunia, daisy, verbena, salvia, marigold, and snapdragon.

Seasons change and so does the weather. Primula and pansy bring a springtime cheer. Hot colors let you know that summer is here. As the days get cooler, mums and asters remind us that fall is near. Evergreen boughs, colored branches, and berries bring a festive look to the house. These ideas give you color and interest throughout the year, acknowledging the changing of the seasons.

Everyone Loves Raspberries

In the north country, we love our raspberries. They are one of the most popular bush fruit, second only to the beloved strawberry. Hardy in our area, raspberries will produce fruit for 10 years or more. They are in the bramble family and need plenty of space.

July bearing

Raspberries have a perennial root, but their canes are biennial. The first year the branches will grow, the second year they will flower, fruit and then die.

Everbearing

The principle is the same as July bearing except that they fruit twice on the same wood, in the fall and then again in early summer. Do not prune in the fall. Prune canes that have finished fruiting in the early summer. The plant will then produce more branches for the following season.



Planting

Choose a location that has good air flow and full sun. Clear area of all weeds. It is difficult to work the soil after the patch is established. Make sure plenty of manure and compost are tilled in. Plant 3' apart and rows should be 10' apart. Plant red raspberries 2" deeper than in the pot. Leave the soil surface loose around the crown so that the lower buds can emerge. Cut the branches back to 12" tall. Fertilizing should not be needed and water with a soaker hose or ground flood the area as needed. By not watering the foliage, this will cut back on mildews and fungi growing on the leaf surfaces. Stake individually or support with strong wire on either side of the plants.

Conserve moisture

Mulching can benefit in 2 ways, by conserving moisture and adding organic matter to the patch. Shredded bark, newspaper, leaves or shavings all work. Do not place mulch more than 2" thick.

Pruning

Remove all weak canes and anything dead, dying and/or diseased. Thin the crown out so that the canes are 6" apart. Cut canes to ground level. The branches that are finished fruiting will look pale in color and brittle in appearance. Cut these branches to ground level also.

Weed, cultivate, and top dress with compost and mulch each fall after clean up.

For the fruit connoisseur

Yellow raspberries are fragile and seldom seen in stores. Ideal for the home gardener, fruit lovers could consider the yellow raspberry as one of the finest fruit in the world.

Hamming It Up

A man walks into the doctor's office with a worried look on his face. "I need to see the doctor," he tells the attractive receptionist. "What seems to be the trouble," replies the receptionist. "I think I'm invisible," says the man. The receptionist responds, "If that's the case, the doctor won't be able to see you."

Hamlines

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

John Keats

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