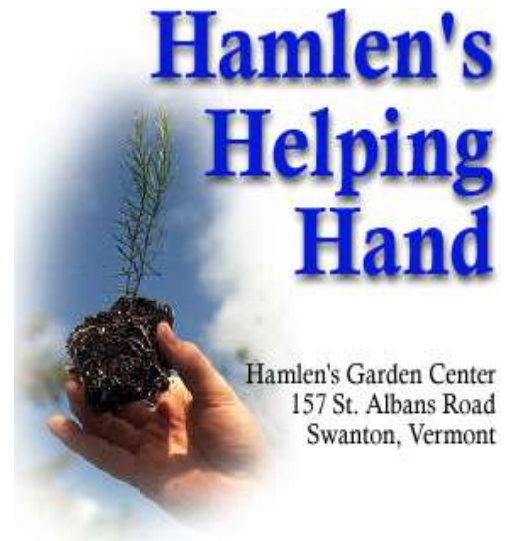


Welcome to Hamlen's Helping Hand!

This is our Summer newsletter, the 2nd newsletter of 2004.
We look forward to seeing you at the garden center.

In this issue...

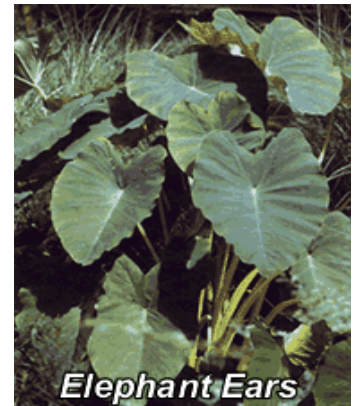


The Big, the Bold, and the Beautiful!
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Hamlines

Foliage plants play a large role in the perennial garden. They add a variety of shapes, texture and form to help create drama and atmosphere. Big perennials are used as accent and strong focal points. The large leaves convey a tropical climate. Exotic-looking plants seem to have the effect of making it seem hotter than it really is.

Water features

The following plants will tolerate partial shade if the plants have good composted soil and sufficient moisture through the dry times of the year: ornamental rhubarb, ligularia, gunnera, featherleaf rogersflower. These giants are especially beautiful beside a stream or pond in part shade. Planted on the margin of water they give a luxurious, lush feeling and their reflections create further interest.



Some like it hot, some like it cool

The following plants should be used in the background of borders as specimen plants, and all like it hot: adams needle, colewort, Scotch thistle, spiny bear's breeches.

The following prefer a rich humus soil with plenty of moisture and shade: meadowsweet, goatsbeard, bleeding heart, and hostas. Angelica gigas, (purple parsnip) prefers moisture and shade. This giant is a biennial, so it needs to be planted every year for 2-3 years to establish. Allow flowers to set seed and encourage to self sow.

Think BIG!

Big annuals are always rewarding and fun. They put all their growth on in one year and you see the plant in its full glory. Canna lilies, elephant ears and Ricinus communis(Castor bean) can create a tropical affect. Amaranthus tricolor(Fountain plant) and Pennisetum setaceum 'Rubrum' (Purple-leaved fountain grass) provide texture, color and interest.

Some of the most attractive features in the garden are usually associated with large leaved perennials and

water, two very strong elements that work well together.

Woodland Gardening in Dry Shade

The biggest challenge in woodland settings is to provide enough nutrients to the flowers and shrubs that you are planting. The tree roots will remove most of the nutrients from the soil. Improving the soil and if possible, thinning out dense canopies will allow better air circulation and rainfall to penetrate.

Soil amendments

- Build up your soil base by layering leaf mold, well rotted manure, compost and topsoil.
- Do not bury the tree trunk or put too much soil around the base of the tree. This will damage the existing trees by placing their feeder roots too deep. The maximum depth of soil amendments around the base of a tree should be 4 inches or less. You can go 8-10" deep if only burying 1 or 2 sides of the tree.
- Organic matter should be added every spring after the garden has been cleaned up. Add 2" and lightly fork into the garden soil.
- Mulching with organic material can help retain moisture. Leaf mold, wood chips or shredded bark would work well. (If you are mulching the area, fork in the mulch with compost added every 2 years, then re-mulch.)



Selection of plant material

Many woodland plants die back or are slow to emerge. For this reason, you can companion plant different types in the same area to replace each other. One plant will die back while another will replace it. Adding dimension to a shade garden can be achieved by multi-layering plants.

Ferns, bleeding hearts, corydalis, trillium, leopard's bane and woodland bulbs will die back in the heat of the summer. Using ground covers like lamium, periwinkle, hosta, sweet woodruff and ajuga will fill in the empty spaces. Hosta, solomon seal, anemone, and dwarf astilbe emerge later in the spring. Perennial geraniums are beautiful fillers along with coralbells and windflower.



To plant or not to plant

The best time of the year to plant is spring or fall. There is adequate rainfall to help the plants establish their roots. Water regularly during the first growing season. If you must plant during the summer, use a soaker hose and keep moist.

Treasures in the shade.

Seeing a patch of trillium or wild ginger is so refreshing after a long winter here in Vermont. There are a few hardy bell shaped clematis that respond quite well to dry shade and produce an abundance of flowers with a long bloom time (C. alpina and C. macropetala). Helebores have soft colored flowers and beautiful

glossy foliage. Yellow foxglove and red barrenwort add interest as well as lungwort and viola labradorica.

There are many challenges for dry shade, but if care is used in the selection of the plants and proper soil has been added, a shade garden can be a beautiful addition to your garden experience.

Natural Insect Repellents

Organic plant protection can help create and maintain a balance of nature on your piece of land. Trying to live in a poison free world is getting harder, but you can make a difference in your own back yard. Using natural organic treatments before using a stronger treatment, is a good way to start.

Diatomaceous earth

This product is a nonpoisonous powder. It comes from crushed seashells and does not hurt warm blooded animals. Microscopically, the crushed seashells are like a wall of jagged broken glass that the insect has to get over. It can be used indoors or outdoors safely. Place a ring of diatomaceous earth around the base of the plant. It is a short lived product and should be re- applied every week or two. It controls ants, earwigs, centipedes, slugs and other insects and worms.

Pyrethrum

Is a well known botanical insecticide that has been used for hundreds of years. Made from a type of chrysanthemum flower, is also safe for warm blooded animals. Use to control mealy bugs, aphids, spider mites and white flies on vegetables and flowers. Can be used indoors or outdoors. For aphids and mealybugs, you need to re-apply every 2-3 days for a 10 day period.

Sulphur

has been used as a fungicide for thousands of years. It works well on shrubs and flowers to control mildews and fungus. If using the dust form, use only on calm days. It is known to harm some beneficial insects, so caution should be used when using sulphur.

Rotenone

is another plant derived botanical insecticide. Rotenone can be safely used on all vegetables and shrubs. Apply every 7-10 days and should be applied to both top and bottom sides of foliage. Use to control potato beetle, japanese beetle, cabbage worms, and other insects.

Milky spore

can be used to control japanese beetle in their young grub stage. The milky disease spores are spread through the lawn with a special dispenser. It can take up to one year to be effective, but lives in the soil and enlarges its population. Milky disease spores can live in the soil for up to ten years. It infects the grub, changing its blood from a clear color to a milky color, killing it before it emerges as a beetle.



Milky Spore Questions and Answers

Q. What is Milky Spore? Milky Spore is naturally occurring bacterium that affects Japanese Beetle, June Beetle and certain other common lawn grubs.

Q. How fast does the Spore work? Milky Spore begins working upon application wherever grubs are feeding. Warm climates can achieve complete control in 1 to 3 years. Colder areas may require 3-5 years.

Q. How long does it last? Once established in the lawn Milky Spore lasts 15 to 20 years!

Q. Will freezing ruin the Spore? What about heavy rain? No. Once applied Milky Spore is not affected by environmental conditions.

Q. Will fertilizer affect the Spore? No. Milky Spore is not affected by lawn chemicals. They may all be applied at the same time.

Q. Can I use Milky Spore in the vegetable garden? Yes! Milky Spore is harmless to food crops. Milky Spore may also be used on pasture land.

Q. Should children and pets be kept off the treated lawn? No. Milky Spore is not a poison. It will not affect humans, pets, birds, fish or other beneficial insects, ponds, streams or well water.

Q. Can I mix the Spore in water and spray it? No. Milky Spore must be applied in its original dry state.

Q. Can I cut my grass after applying the Spore? No. Do not mow your grass until the Spore has been watered into the soil by rain or hose for 15 minutes or longer.

Garlic

has been recently introduced to the market as an insecticide and as an effective control on powdery mildew. To take care of most soft bodied insects use a mixture of fresh chopped garlic, mineral oil and pure soap. Strain the mixture then add 20 parts water to 1 part solution and spray on the plants.

All these products are considered organic insecticides because they are derived from natural products. All are not harmful except for rotenone which you have to wait 24 hours before you can harvest and eat your vegetables. There is a large selection of other repellents, see us at Hamlen's for other ideas on how to keep pesky insects away.

Sometimes organic methods of treatment can take more time, but it is worth the effort in the long run for the health of you and your family.



of

Animal Repellents

We don't think of a bird as a pest, but if they are eating all of your beautiful fruit, the bird is definitely a problem. The idea behind natural pest control is to hinder the animal from damaging your crop, but not harming the animal at the same time. There are many great ideas out there on how to do this. I will list a few that have been known to work well in our area.

Birds

They love to wait until the last moment then the night before harvest, the entire tree has been picked clean of all its wonderful fruit. For smaller fruit trees and bushes, a light green nylon netting is draped over the plant. This minimizes the amount of loss that they can do. Reflective iridescent tape in long pieces can be strung throughout the tree. The tape acts as a deterrent to keep the birds out.

If birds are a problem on buildings and ledges, you can use "tacky foot", which is putting a bead of the product 3/8" thick on a double sided strip of tape. Put the tape down where the birds like to hang out.

Gypsy moth

The larvae and the caterpillar stage can be stopped by putting a band of special double sided tape to trap the insects before they can get up into the tree. This tape should be used only on thick barked trees.

Squirrels

These little creatures can be a big pain for people who like to feed the birds and not the squirrels. There is a product called "squirrel away". This is made from very strong powdered HOT peppers. You mix the powder in with the bird seed, being careful not to get any on yourself or in your eyes. The birds have no taste buds and cannot taste the peppers. The squirrels on the other hand are very sensitive to the hot taste and will not want to go near the seed again. If they are persistent squirrels, you may have to repeat once a month.

Deer

One of the most popular and safest ways to repel deer is to use scents that warn them to stay away. Urine is used by animals to mark their territory. Different urine types can be used to repel different animals. Coyote urine works for keeping deer away. You can use urine scent tags, dispenser bottles or foam darts. These are strategically placed on or around the plants that you are trying to protect. There is also a powdered form that can be sprinkled around the base of the plant. This is a short lived treatment and should be re-applied every week to 10 days for the first month. Once a month thereafter.

Rabbit and other small animals

Bobcat and fox urine have the same effect as coyote urine, only effecting different animals. Used in the same manner, it can help keep rodents and rabbits from your garden.

Spiders

"Cobweb eliminator" is a natural and organic way to stop spiders from making your house their home

Buried Alive

Mulching can be beneficial to trees if properly done. One of the biggest problems is that people are burying their trees too deep with mulch. It would be like burying a plant part way up the stem. Never pile up mulch against the stems of your trees.

The root collar flare is where the root meets the stem. This flare should be at the soil surface.

Too much mulch will create 2 main problems that will injure and even kill the tree.

1. The buildup of moisture deteriorates the tree bark. Insects, disease and decay move in, damaging the sap wood and limiting water and nutrients from going upwards to the branches.

2. Mulching too deep also encourages adventitious roots. These are roots that grow from an unusual place, such as on the trunk. These roots tend to encircle the tree, choking or girdling it at the root collar flare.



Symptoms of decline will uniformly affect leaf color, size, rate of growth and reduce root growth. Premature fall color and leaf dropping is associated with the decline of the tree.

The main use for mulch is to suppress weed growth from around the tree base. Allow for 2-3" of mulch maximum, and do not let it touch the bark. Different mulches can be used for other reasons. Pine needles work well in a woodland setting. Chopped up leaves or wood chips work and they increase soil fertility. Mulches are also good at reducing water evaporation. Stone chips can be used if there is a cloth barrier to keep the stone from mixing in the soil.

Trees may decline and prematurely die as a result of over mulching.

Be kind, do not over-mulch!

Blueberries

A wonderful plant that is easy to grow and will provide you with fruit for 8-10 weeks a year. Highbush blueberries are the most common for commercial growers and home gardeners. They are relatively pest resistant and low maintenance.

There are 3 major requirements

1. Acidic soil. The soil should be tested before planting. Optimum Ph level is 4.5 to 5.0. Adding organic matter to the soil will keep the acidity up, but if you need to lower the Ph, you can use aluminum sulfate or sulphur. 150 pounds of sulphur per 1000 sq. ft. raises the Ph by 1 Ph level.

2. Organic material. It is important to build up organic material. compost, peat moss, chopped up leaves, pine needles, cottonseed meal and/or straw can be incorporated into the soil. Amend the soil each year by adding more organic matter.

Good drainage. Planting on a slope helps ensure that the plants have good drainage.

Location

- If you live in a very cold location, planting on a northern slope delays flowering and reduces the chance of frost damaging the flower buds.
- Blueberries need a minimum of 8 hours of full sunlight.
- Protect from cold north winds in the winter by using a wind break.

Planting

Each plant should be 4-6' apart, 1-2" deeper than in the pot. Space rows 8-10' apart. Keep cultivars with similar ripening seasons no more than 2 rows apart.

Fertilizing

Keeping your soil healthy with organic matter will reduce the amount of fertilizer needed. Fertilize with 10-10-10 at 1/2 cup per plant at the end of May, then repeat 6 weeks after.

Moisture

The berries should have constant moisture. When watering, use a soaker hose to provide ample moisture. It is best to remember when watering blueberries to water in the morning and not get the fruit wet. This will prevent fruit from splitting...

Early, mid, and late season varieties should be planted together. This helps cross pollination and extends your season of harvest.

Hamming It Up

Two caterpillars are sitting on a rock and a butterfly flies overhead. One caterpillar says to the other "you will never get me up in one of those things".

A woman says to her husband, "please say something nice to me to make me feel good. When I look in the mirror, my legs look heavy, my arms look flabby, and my once hourglass figure looks like all the sand is stuck in the middle". The husband replies, "well there is certainly nothing wrong with your eyesight".

"The goal of life is living in agreement with nature."
John Zeno, Greek philosopher (335-263 B.C.)

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