

The Growing Scene Gazette

The Growing Scene, Inc. 17009 Harmony Rd, Marengo, Illinois 60152

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CELEBRATING OUR 11TH YEAR!

By Kathleen Carr

Spring has officially hit our home! On Saturday, Christopher my 4 year old son, commented "Mom, it is almost like Florida!" We traveled to Florida in March and enjoyed 6 glorious days in Fort Myers and 1 really long 14 hour day at Walt Disney World. The kids are spending more and more time outside and Chris and I are spending a little more time inside, just smiling. Spring is here, we all made it through a cozy, yet long winter.

We have spend the past 2 months gearing up for the opening day of our garden center. We officially opened for our 11th year on April 14. We are looking forward to seeing all of our customers.

Melissa, our garden center manager, has spent this past week cleaning the office and greenhouse and pricing all of our stock. If you stop in during the week, Melissa's smiling face will be the one to greet you. I will usually be at the garden center on Friday and Saturdays and selected Sundays. I am available to meet with homeowners regarding our landscape consultation, design and installation services on Monday and Tuesdays.

Please join us as we celebrate our Spring Open House on May 6th and 7th. This is usually our busiest weekend, for good reasons. We have great plant sales, free refreshments, and hourly giveaways.

Please check out our new website

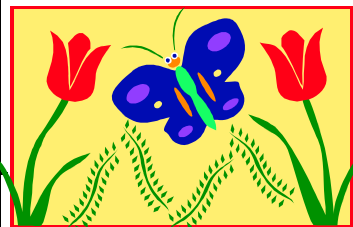
www.thegrowingscene.com.
Matt Kelley our website guru has put a lot of time and effort into getting things just right for you and us. We love it and hope you will enjoy it as well

We are pleased to be participating in two community events this Spring. The Hampshire Beautification project through the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and the First Presbyterian Church of Woodstock's annual Plant sale. If you live in either of those communities, please check these events out. There are two very worthwhile fundraising events.

Don't Miss Our
Spring Open House
May 6th & 7th

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WELCOME KATE!

We are thrilled to announce the addition of Kate Kelley to our staff. She is joining us this summer on an internship from Kishwaukee College. Kate recently graduated from Northern Illinois University with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She is currently studying Horticulture at Kishwaukee College.

Kate has a rich and varied background including work at a confectionary store and a music performance studio.

Kate is looking forward to putting her book knowledge of horticulture to use this summer while assisting homeowners in beautifying their homes.

Kate grew up in Rockford where she enjoyed working on the landscape around her home.

Please stop by and welcome Kate. You may also want to ask her how those chocolate covered candies are made!

Dates to Remember:

- May 6th and 7th Spring Open House
- May 14th Mother's Day
- May 29th Memorial Day

SOIL PREPARATION

By Kathleen Carr



I learned the importance of soil preparation through humiliation. I wanted to establish a beautiful, lush groundcover bed in our front yard underneath a maple tree. I mistakenly thought that I could simply get out a trowel, dig holes 8 inches apart (the recommended spacing according to a chart in a book), insert the plants into the ground and water occasionally. The first thing I learned was that it was really hard to dig around the roots on a maple tree. The second thing I learned was that if you don't do a job right the first time it takes years to correct your mistakes.

What I had failed to do in my youthful exuberance and ignorance was to prepare the soil correctly. In my rush to complete the job, I had failed to do a key part of the job. I spent the next 4 years 1) trying unsuccessfully to weed the area 2) ripping most of the plants out and starting over and 3) cringing every time I drove into my driveway and saw 6" high weeds towering over my sickly periwinkle.

Soil preparation, when done correctly, will take as much, if not more, time than the installation of the plants. Most plants grow better in a fertile, well-drained soil. A rich, black soil provides the nutrients that the plants need to grow successfully.

First examine your own soil. Figure out the color and texture of your soil. Unfortunately, reddish clay soils are prevalent in this area. These are most common in new home subdivisions. During the development process builders scrape away the black topsoil from the new home sites. They construct the house on the subsoil,

Perhaps the chiefest attraction of a garden is that occupation can always be found there. With mind and fingers busy, cares are soon forgotten.

which is usually a hard clay surface. After the construction is complete they bring in several truckloads of topsoil back onto the home site. When the final grading is done the new homeowner is left with a thin layer of black topsoil on top of a hard, clay soil.

I recommend that you test get your soil tested. The University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service offers soil-testing kits. You can also purchase very basic testing kits at a local hardware store or garden center. These results will give you a clearer picture of the type of soil that you have in your yard.

All soils can benefit from an organic fertilizer. We use Mushroom Compost. It is horse manure that has been used by mushroom growers for a period of time and then sold to be bagged up to be used by homeowners as a fertilizer. Straight horse manure is too high in Nitrogen to be able to be used right away in soil preparation.

Soil compaction is another very common problem. Peat Moss is an excellent soil amendment that is used to assist in aerating the soil.

If you are developing a new planting area, I recommend that you clear the area first. If there is grass there now, kill it. There are several methods that you can use to kill it. You can rot till the grass, you can spray the area with a chemical or you could put a piece of plastic out in an attempt to smother the vegetation. Once you have killed the grass, then work in the necessary soil amendments either by hand or with a rototiller. The more you till the area now, the easier it will be to plant.

One very important note-Do not do soil preparation work while the soil is wet. You will ruin the structure of the soil if you try to work with it while it is wet.

OUR SUPPLIERS; Local, Knowledgeable Reliable

By Kathleen Carr

Two commonly asked questions are; "Do you grow your plants?" And "Where do your plants come from?" My answers are always the same. Our plants are grown in McHenry, Boone and Kane counties. We purchase from local growers who have been growing for many, many years. Our main supplier just celebrated their 150th year in business. While I am thrilled that we just celebrated our 10th year, that is nothing compared to 150 years. They have spent the last 150 years working diligently to supply the area landscapers and garden centers with the finest trees and shrubs available anywhere. There is nothing that I can do to grow a better product.

So, no, we don't grow our own plants, we purchase from local nurseries who are State certified. Where are these plants grown is a very pertinent question that I would encourage all of you to ask before your purchase any plant. Our hanging baskets and annuals are grown by greenhouse grower in Michigan. Again, much research went into determining which grower to buy from.

Each year there are certain concerns in the industry. This year, below grade hardwood mulch is finding its way into the market. Please know that we only purchase bulk mulch from Aspen Valley Landscape Supply. They sell only the highest quality mulch that is free of in-

sects.

Buy with confidence, buy from us!



ANNUAL FLOWERS

By Kathleen Carr

Summer and flowers. The two words are synonymous. You simply can't have one without the other. The most popular way to grow flowers in Midwestern yards is through the use of Annual flowers. The term annual flower is often confusing, but the results are not, great looking flowers through the summer all the way until the first frost. There are three basic types of flowers. Annuals complete their life cycle in one year, biennials, complete their life cycle in two years and perennials that just keep growing and growing. Another way to remember the terminology is that annuals need to be replanted every year.

Annual flowers are susceptible to frost. Mother's Day marks the beginning of the annual planting season. Yes, we can still get frost late into May, however it is usually safe to start planting your annuals now. If freezing temperatures are predicted and your flowers are already in the ground, covering them up with sheets or coffee cans will help them survive the cold. I went shopping at Jewel in early

April and noticed a complete selection of annual flowers. I was very tempted to tell the young Mom who was shopping for flowers that undoubtedly her plants would die if she planted them outside. I just walked by thinking that she would be back in May to make her purchase all over again.

The main attribute to annual flowers is a very long bloom time. They continue to bloom from the time they are planted through until the first frost in the fall. Perennial flowers come up on their own every year, but no perennial has the long bloom time of an annual.

Annuals can either be planted in the ground or in a container. Either way, they need a rich soil and lots of water. If planting in a container, fill the container with potting soil. Potting soil is a lighter mix of nutrients that is optimum for the growth of annuals. When choosing a container, make sure that the container has holes in the bottom to allow for the drainage of water.

Annuals vary by the amount of light that they require to grow. Before you go shopping,

make a note of the amount of light in the areas that you want to plant in. Suggested annuals for a full sun situation include Petunias, Zinnias, Marigolds, Alyssum, Vinca, Geraniums, and Strawflower. Coleus, impatiens, begonias and lobelia do well in shady situations.

Annuals that trail or vine are very popular. Wave petunias, sweet potato vine and alyssum all will trail over a container.

Windy situations require plants that are a bit hardier. Geraniums and strawflower will usually withstand strong winds.

If you are planting flowers at the cemetery this month, Geraniums, snapdragons and petunias are a good choice.

Enjoy this precious time of the year-planting time.

GRANDMA' RECIPE BOOK

From Grandpa's Garden to Grandma's Kitchen

By Jean Britton

STRAWBERRY DREAM DESSERT

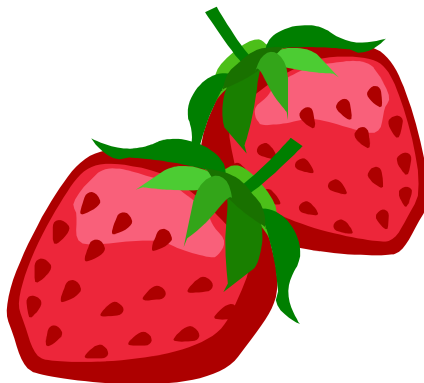
Ingredients:

- 4, 3 oz. packages of strawberry Jell-O
- 2 cups hot water
- 2 1/2 cups fresh sliced strawberries
- 1 Angel food cake, prepared
- 2 packages of Dream Whip mix

In medium bowl dilute 2 packages of strawberry Jell-O. Mix in 2 cups hot water. Add sliced strawberries. Tear Angel food cake into small pieces and put into 9" x 13" pan. Pour Jell-O and strawberry mixture over cake pieces and refrigerate until set.

After the first mixture is set, dilute 2 more packages of Jell-O mix in 2 cups of hot water, let partially set. Prepare 1 package of Dream Whip mix. Add it to second Jell-O mixture. Pour over first mixture and let set.

When ready to serve make second Dream Whip mix, cut Jell-O dessert into pieces and top each with Dream Whip. Makes a very cool, summer dessert.



SPRING OPEN HOUSE

Join us on Saturday, May 6 and Sunday, May 7 for our 11th Annual Spring Open House. We promise refreshments, great sales on our plants, and free give-aways.

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND HOURS

Memorial Day weekend is usually a great weekend to spend gardening! We will be open on Saturday, May 27 from 9-6, Sunday May 28 from 10-5 and Monday, May 29 from 10-4. Please celebrate and remember those who have fought and died for our country. Remember-we are open on Memorial Day!



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Hours:
Monday-Saturday 9-6
Sunday 10-5



*A Garden Center and
 Landscaping Company*

**JOIN US FOR OUR SPRING OPEN HOUSE, SATURDAY, MAY 6th
 AND SUNDAY, MAY 7th FROM 9:00AM-6:00PM
 REFRESHMENTS, SPECIAL SALES AND GIVE-AWAYS!**

**CHURCH MISSION PLANT & GARDEN ART SALE
 SUNDAY, MAY 14**

The First Presbyterian Church of Woodstock is hosting a Plant and Garden Art Sale on Sunday, May 14. Gorgeous perennial flowers and beautiful annual flower flats and hanging baskets will be for sale. Birdhouses and birdbaths will also be available. All of the proceeds from the sale will directly benefit local and national mission endeavors. Home of the Sparrow and The Woodstock Food Pantry will be direct recipients of funds that are raised.

The sale is taking place at the church from 9:00am-12:00pm on Sunday, May 14. The church is located just off of the historic Woodstock Square. The address

is 225 W. Calhoun Street, Woodstock.

This Mother's Day sale is the perfect opportunity to either treat yourself to a Mother's Day present or buy one for a loved one.

Please consider attending this very fun and worthwhile event and supporting local mission endeavors! We are also in need of donations for the sale. Please call me at 815-923-7322 if you would like to donate any gardening items. **Thank you!** *Kathi Carr*

The Growing Scene Gazette, is a publication of **The Growing Scene, Inc.** **The Growing Scene** is a garden center and landscaping company located at 17009 Harmony Road, Marengo. The phone number is 815-923-7322.

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