



Contents

Hellebores.....	1
Pansies.....	2
Its a bug eat bug world.....	3
Whats up?	
At the Garden Center	4
Green Tip of the month.....	4

Village Garden Center

Garden News by Eva Soued

Issue 1, March 2010

Get rid of those winter blues by planting some Helleborus. Helleborus is a perennial flowering plant that blooms from late winter to mid-spring. It is commonly known as Hellebores and belongs to the Ranunculaceae family.

Helleborus is native to Europe from western Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, and eastward across the Mediterranean region. The flowers have five petals and are surrounded by a ring of small, cup like petals that hold nectar. The interesting thing about this plant is that the petals do not fall as other petals do, but remain on the plant lasting for many months.

It has been said that the Helleborus flower resembles a rose and it is sometimes called wild roses, Christmas rose or Lenten rose. However, Helleborus do not belong to the rose family at all. Helleborus are grown in gardens for decoration. But the main reason Helleborus are planted is that these are valued by gardeners for their winter into spring flowering period and the plants are extremely frost resistant.

Helleborus also has medicinal qualities. In ancient history and the early days of medicine, Hippocrates used Helleborus as a purgative. Back then, Helleborus was also used to treat paralysis, gout, insanity and other diseases. Also, some historians believe that Alexander the Great died because of an overdose of Helleborus. Regardless of the history, Helleborus is a beautiful flower



Pansies

Pansies and violas are the first flower that can be planted in the spring. Both are in the same genus (Viola) and are similar in planting. Violas are usually one color while pansies can have several colors. Both have five heart shaped, overlapping petals with markings that resemble a human face. They are usually grown as annuals in the north although some have been able to keep pansies for 2 or 3 years in the warm weather zones, probably because they self seeded.

Pansies and violas aren't too picky; they will grow in full sun to partial shade and bloom spring through early summer. You might even get lucky and they will rebloom in the fall when the weather gets cooler. They are low growing, not more than 9 inches in height, and well suited for edgings or for being planted in rock gardens or paths. They do well in containers along with flowering spring bulbs. They come in a wide variety of colors including red, purple, blue, bronze, pink, black, yellow, white, lavender, orange, apricot, mauve, and mahogany and may contain one to three of the colors. Some pansies have ruffled petals that look double. Both pansies and violas come in a variety of sizes from tiny to very large blooms.

History

Pansies and violas are edible and can be added to salads for color and flavor. They have been noted as an ingredient for love potions in Shakespeare plays and folk tales and have been used in the past as a remedy for venereal disease. Violas were common in Greece during 4th century B.C. and they cultivated it for medicinal purposes. Pansies were observed later as a smaller plant that appeared in alpine meadows and on rocky ledges. Both plants were embraced by European gardeners and in the early 1800's Lord Gambier and his gardener William Thompson began crossing different Viola species and they came up with a bloom that had huge blocks of color on the lower petals, which they called the face. "Medora" as named in 1839 and was the forerunner of the pansy we have today.



It's a bug eat

Bug world

Lady beetles, ladybugs, or ladybird beetles are among the most visible and best known beneficial predatory insects. Over 450 species are found in North America. Some are native and some have been introduced from other countries.

Most lady beetles in North America are beneficial as both adults and larvae, feeding primarily on aphids. They also feed on mites, small insects, and insect eggs. The two exceptions are the introduced Mexican bean beetle, *Epilachna varivestis*, and the squash beetle, *Epilachna borealis*. The adults and larvae of both species feed on plants.

Appearance

Lady beetles are usually red or orange with black markings. Some lady beetles are black, often with red markings. They have alligator-like larvae.

Habitat (Crops)

Many crops benefit from lady beetles. They are helpful for growers of vegetables, grain crops, legumes, strawberries, and tree crops; however any crop that is attacked by aphids will benefit from these beetles.

Pests Attacked

Most lady beetles found on crops and in gardens are aphid predators. Some species prefer only certain aphid species while others will attack many aphid species on a variety of crops. Some prefer mite or scale species. If aphids are scarce, lady beetle adults and larvae may feed on the eggs of moths and beetles, and mites, thrips, and other small insects, as well as pollen and nectar. They may also be cannibalistic. Because of their ability to survive on other prey when aphids are in short supply, lady beetles are particularly valuable natural enemies.

Appearance

Adult lady beetles are small, round to oval, and dome-shaped. The most well known have black markings on red, orange, or yellow forewings, but some are black. The area immediately behind the head, the pronotum, may also have a distinctive pattern. The color and pattern of markings for each species may vary, but can aid identification.

Whats Up? At the Garden Center

Brand new For 2010

Find them this Spring at Village Garden Center



Coreopsis Sienna Sunset

Echinacea Flame Thrower



Green tip of the month

Save your coffee grounds

- Sprinkle used grounds around plants before rain or watering, for a slow-release nitrogen.
- Add to compost piles to increase nitrogen balance. Coffee filters and tea bags break down rapidly during **composting**.
- Dilute with water for a gentle, fast-acting liquid fertilizer. Use about a half-pound can of wet grounds in a five-gallon bucket of water; let sit outdoors to achieve ambient temperature.
- Mix into soil for houseplants or new **vegetable beds**.
- Encircle the base of the plant with a coffee and eggshell barrier to repel pests.
- If you are into vermi-posting, feed a little bit to your worms

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