

# Village Garden Center

& Landscape Service

ISSUE 84 February 2017

## *Forcing Branches into Bloom*

Adding the right flowering trees and shrubs to your landscape will ensure an explosion of color come early spring. Choose carefully, and you'll have a bonus of branches you can bring indoors.

### *Early Bloomers*



Use the chart below to determine shrubs and trees that are terrific for early blooms. The chart provides a general time line; shrubs and trees may flower earlier or later depending on climate and growing conditions. The closer to a plant's natural bloom time you harvest its branches, the quicker the flowers will sprout indoors. Prune branches on a day that's above freezing to ease the transition between outside and inside temperatures.

**Quick Tip:** Always consider a plant's overall appearance before

removing branches.

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### *January*

Depending on where you live and what you plant, you can start hauling in armloads of Cornelian cherry dogwood (Cornus mas), forsythia, vernal witch hazel (Hamamelis vernalis), and pear tree branches as early as January.



## February

Gather branches from flowering quince (*Chaenomeles* spp. pictured.), rhododendron, pussy willow (*Salix discolor*), apple and crab apple (*Malus* spp.) trees, and cherry (*Prunus* spp.) Trees.



## March

Continue the chain of soul-lifting spring color with March clipped boughs of magnolias, mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), beautybush (*Kolkwitzia amabilis*), lilacs, flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), mock orange (*Philadelphus* spp.), bridalwreath (*Spiraea prunifolia*), *Deutzia*, and *Fothergilla*.

## *Placement Tips*

### *Vertical Interest*

Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), blooming pink in mid- to late spring; serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.), bearing white flowers in early spring; and the dogwoods, with their white to pink blooms in late spring, add height in shade gardens. Magnolia, apple, crab apple, pear, cherry, and plum trees can be planted individually, in an orchard row, centered in a ring of annuals, or as a supporting player in a border that blends deciduous and evergreen shrubs, perennials, and other mini trees.

### *Focal Points*

More expansive, old-time favorites such as bridalwreath, mock orange, and flowering quince create stand-alone centers of attention near walkways or in patches of lawn.

## Boundaries

As a lot-line hedge, consider marshaling a row of golden forsythia; red- or yellow-blooming witch hazel; white, pink, or purple lilacs; or white-blossoming honeysuckle. Or, mass tall, wide, and pink-flowering beautybushes as a privacy screen.



## *Background*

Place the catkin-bearing pussy willow at the back of borders, where its less-than-stellar form adds behind-the-scenes structure and height.

## *Foreground*

In the forefront of beds, opt for rhododendrons, blooming in a kaleidoscopic range of hues; mountain laurel, with flowers ranging from white to rose; and Fothergilla, boasting white bottlebrushlike spikes. These shrubs will spark close-to-home interest when planted near foundations.



## *Forcing Basics*

*Step 1:* Select pencil-thick branch sections 12 x 24 inches long that boast numerous plump buds. Using a sharp knife or hand pruner, cut the branch, making an angled cut at the base. Immediately place each branch in water.

*Step 2:* Bring the branches inside, then strip buds, twigs, and leaves from lower sections that will be under water. Use a utility knife to pare away an inch or two of bark from the base. Smash woody bases with a hammer. These openings enhance water absorption.



*Step 3:* Place branches in a water-filled container set in a bathtub, and give them a long, tepid shower. Wrap branches in wet newspaper, then place them in clean, lukewarm water. Move to a cool, dark spot; mist branches and change water daily. Unwrap after two or three days.



*Step 4:* Once the flowers have started to pop, arrange branches in a tall, water-filled vase or pitcher, and bring them into the spotlight. Set the arrangement in a bright-but-cool spot out of direct sunlight. The cooler the spot, the longer the branches will bloom.

# From The Garden

## of Eva

### **Lobster Mac and Cheese**

Add lobster and some deliciously creamy cheese to your mac and cheese and now you've got a downright upscale romantic meal!



### Ingredients

- 1 pound elbow pasta (or any short cut pasta)
- 9 tablespoons butter
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 pound cooked lobster meat, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, plus more for garnish
- 1 1/2 cups crushed Ritz crackers (about 1 sleeve)
- 1/4 cup flour
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 1/4 cups sharp white cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 1/4 cups gruyere cheese, shredded
- 1 cup fontina cheese, shredded
- 4 ounces brie, rind removed and chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon mustard powder
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper



## *Directions*

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a baking dish with nonstick spray.

2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Boil the pasta until al-dente.

You want it to have a bit of bite because it will finish cooking in the oven. Drain well.

3. While the pasta boils add 3 tablespoons butter to a medium skillet and melt.

Add the garlic and sauté 30 seconds then add in the lobster meat and sauté for 3-5 minutes.

Add the parsley and cook another 30 seconds. Remove the lobster from the pan.

4. Add another 2 tablespoon of butter to the skillet. Throw in the crushed Ritz crackers and toss to coat.

Toast the crumbs for 3-5 minutes, stirring frequently to avoid burning.

Once the crumbs are lightly toasted, remove from the heat and set aside.

5. In the same pot you boiled the pasta, melt the remaining 4 tablespoons butter over medium heat.

Whisk in the flour. Reduce the heat to medium-low and let cook and bubble for 1 minute, stirring once or twice to avoid burning. Gradually whisk in the milk and raise the heat up to medium-high.

Bring the mixture to a boil, whisking frequently until the sauce has thickened, about 2-3 minutes.

Remove from the heat and stir in all of the cheese, mustard powder, cayenne, salt and pepper.

Stir until the cheese is fully melted. Stir in the pasta and about 3/4 of the lobster meat.

Transfer to the prepared baking dish.

6. Evenly sprinkle on the remaining lobster chunks and then the toasted cracker crumbs.

Place the baking dish on a baking sheet.

7. Bake for 20 minutes or until the crumbs are golden brown and the sauce is bubbling.

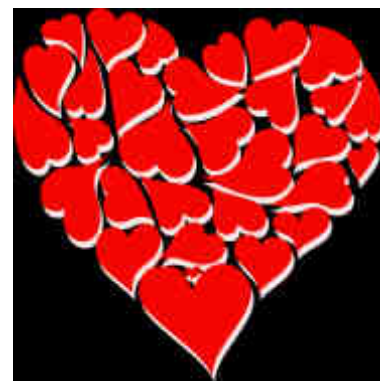
8. Remove from the oven and let sit five minutes.

Dig in!!

*Mac and cheese with lobster?*

*You better believe it.*

*What you won't believe is how easy and creamy this is!*



## New for 2017

### *Zinfin Doll® Hardy hydrangea*

#### *Hydrangea paniculata*



#### Features:

Pink and white two-toned blooms!

A beautiful new hardy hydrangea with loads of bodacious blooms that emerge pure white and then turn bright pink from the bottom up.

Flowers eventually age to a dark pink-red, and stay colorful for months. It looks a bit like classic Pinky Winky hydrangea, but with full, mophead flowers, and it blooms much earlier, too. Strong stems hold the flowers upright in the garden, and make it an excellent cut flower, too.

#### Top three reasons to grow Zinfin Doll panicle hydrangea:

Large, colorful mophead blooms appear earlier in summer than other varieties

Blooms every year, no matter how harsh winter was

Provides 3+ months of flowers

Fall Interest, Heat Tolerant,

Uses: Border Plant, Container, Cut Flower, Dried Flower, Landscape, Mass Planting, Specimen or Focal Point

Uses Notes: Mixed borders, cutting gardens, specimen plant

#### Maintenance Notes:

Panicle hydrangeas are super easy and reliable. In cold climates, they should get a minimum of six hours of sun each day; in hot areas, morning sun and afternoon shade are best. These are shallow-rooted plants that really benefit from a 2-3" (5-7.6 cm) layer of mulch.

As for pruning, plan to cut these plants back by about one-third in early spring. This builds up a strong base while encouraging vigorous new growth to produce lots of blooms.

Light Requirement: Sun, Maintenance: Easy Blooms On: New Wood Bloom Time: Summer

Water Category: Average

## New for 2017

### *CranRazz Nectar Bush*

### *Buddleja 'Boscranz' Plant*

#### Plant Description

Attractive and fragrant flowers adorn long flower spikes that reach up to 8 inches long with a bright red coloration likened to cran-raspberry juice. A stunning addition to cut flower arrangements.

Use as a foundation plant or in a shrub border. A must for the butterfly garden.

Tolerates heat and drought once established. Deciduous.

Matures at 5 to 6 feet tall and 5 feet wide. Deer tolerant.



### *Pancake™ Arborvitae*

### *Thuja occidentalis*

#### Plant Description

Finely textured, sage-green evergreen with a low, dense rounded habit. Foliage tints slightly blue in fall and winter. Hardy and easy to maintain. Thrives in full sun and resists burning but will tolerate some shade.

Attractive as low border, hedge or in rock gardens.

Type: Shrubs Height: Short 1' (Plant 2-3' apart) Sun-Shade: Full Sun to Half Sun/ Half Shade

Zones: 3-7 Soil Condition: Normal, Sandy

Features to Note: Evergreen, Attracts Birds Wet Site Tolerant

Thuja are versatile evergreen landscape plants. Dense foliage provides excellent coverage for birds.

Small branches may be used for floral arrangements. Long lived



### 1. Support Local and Organic Farmers

Given that insecticides are cited as being the main cause of bee decline, a switch to organic farming is the first logical step. Organic farmers work with nature and the seasons to grow their crops, without the use of harmful pesticides, supporting both biodiversity and the bee.

Take a trip to your local Farmer's Market, meet the people who grow your food and admire the sheer variety of local and in-season fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs. Pre-packaged store bought produce will never look the same again, and buying organic benefits the bees, local farmers, the environment and your health!



### 2. Practice Organic Gardening at Home

Bee-killing chemicals are not only found in industrial practices, but also in many household insecticides too. Make sure to use only certified organic seeds, weed-killers and insect repellents or, better yet, make your own. Why not check out these great ways to [Eliminate 8 Common Garden Pests Naturally](#); these [8 Natural Ways To Kill Garden Weeds](#) or these [10 Genius Tips For Successful Organic Gardening](#)? The more hard-core gardeners out there might even consider providing all the right conditions to foster a diverse and balanced ecosystem in their garden, encouraging an array of birds, butterflies, pollinators, and other wildlife in order to keep pests under control, the way that nature intended.

### 3. Plant Bee-Friendly Flowers & Shrubs

Attract these invaluable creatures to your garden by filling it with vibrant and bee-friendly plants. Not only will you be greeted with an array of color when you step outside your door, but you'll enjoy beautiful aromas, fresh seasonal flowers for your kitchen table and organic herbs picked straight from the garden. If you're stuck for space, try planting some on your balcony, in window boxes or hanging baskets – the bees will thank you for it! Ideal plants include Hawthorn, Portuguese Laurel, Winter Honeysuckle, Lilac, Rosemary, Lavender, Fuchsia and Hydrangea



#### 4. Buy Only Local Honey

Buy local organic honey as opposed to mass-produced supermarket brands. Your local beekeepers are far more likely to care about the health and wellbeing of their bees than large production companies, who just focus on their bottom line. Not only will you keep your food miles down and support local businesses, but eating local honey may also help ward off seasonal allergies.



#### 5. Become a Beekeeper

This one is definitely not for everybody! It takes a certain kind of person to want to dress head to toe in protective clothing and spend their day around bugs that will inevitably give them a sting or two. But if you're interested in learning first-hand how these captivating creatures contribute to our world, and are concerned with conservation, then it just might be for you. The American Beekeeping Federation offer free information on how to start Beekeeping.



#### 6. Adopt a Hive

If you're not ready for the challenge of keeping bees, but are interested in saving these incredible creatures, then you can always 'adopt a hive'. Contact your local beekeeper or national association to see if they offer this program. For an annual fee you will be supporting the work of beekeepers, and will receive honey and honey-based products from your adopted hive, along with information packs and other goodies. You may even have the opportunity to visit your bees!



#### 7. Set up a Bee Refreshment Station

Now that you have rid your garden of nasty insecticides and are actively attracting pollinators through your choice of flowers and shrubs, it's a good idea to set up a refreshment station for tired bees. After all the work



they do, a bee can easily wear itself out and it's not uncommon to see a lone bee lying on the ground, seemingly dead, as it tries to muster up the energy to find food and fresh water. Give them a helping hand by setting up this easy DIY Bee Watering Station or, for an added boost, mix up a little sugar-water syrup. Never give bees artificial sweeteners or honey, which can contain traces of viruses that may be passed on.



#### 8. Learn More About These Captivating Creatures

While no one wants to hear that the world's bee population is under threat, many may balk at the idea of actually attracting bees into their garden. However, it's important to understand that, unlike wasps and hornets, bees are not aggressive and will not sting unless they feel under threat. By learning how to act around a bee, you will avoid getting stung and need not fear them. Honeybees actually die after they sting you (although other types of bees do not) which should prove that they will not attack unless absolutely necessary!

Bees are attracted to brightly colored clothing so wear light colors when out in the garden, and avoid heavily scented beauty products or perfumes. They are often found in the grass so watch where you step and wear shoes when gardening or playing. If a bee hovers around you, don't swat it – just stay still and he will soon 'buzz off'! If you're still not comfortable with the idea of bees in your garden or neighborhood and have found an unwanted hive, make sure to contact your local beekeeper who will safely remove it without harming its inhabitants. A quick online search will find you a local keeper, or contact your national beekeeping organization.



#### 9. Lobby on Behalf of Bees

Unless there is major legislative change or public outcry, industrial farming will continue to use these bee-killing pesticides and destructive agricultural practices. Speak up to influence the governments and companies who can make these changes happen. We need to call for more studies into the health and welfare of bees so we can more fully understand the devastating impact these practices are having on our pollinators, our environment, and our own health. Encourage your local government or council to fill public spaces with bee friendly plants, and petition to conserve what's remaining of the bee's natural habitat in woodlands, grasslands and hedgerows. Make a start right now by signing Greenpeace's petition to Save The Bees!

## 10. Tell A Friend

Lastly but by no means least, help to raise awareness of the bees' plight so that we can build awareness and work together to save the world's hard working bees and our future food supplies! Sharing this article is a great way to start.



### A Devastating Impact on Our Food Supply

Bees are responsible for pollinating many of our key fruit and vegetable crops. In fact, without their help over one third of our crop supply could be in danger of disappearing. Without the busy bees, we might have to say goodbye to almonds, apples, apricots, blueberries, strawberries, tomatoes and zucchini to name just a few. Even worse, with such a dip in food supplies, we could struggle to sustain our global population.

### A Rise in the Cost of Food Production

If we don't have bees to cross-pollinate for us, the job may need to be done by hand – a labor intensive and financially draining task, at an estimated potential cost of 265 billion annually worldwide. That translates to some very expensive fruits and vegetables for consumers!

Of course, this is not a true estimate as, should the bees and their natural pollination techniques disappear completely, their services might prove impossible to replace.

### A Serious Effect on Wild Flowers & Animal Life

Approximately 250,000 species of flowering plants depend on bees to help them pollinate. Without these incredible insects, many wild flowers and other plants would struggle to reproduce. As these flowers and their berries are often a source of food for insects, birds and small mammals, it could have severe consequences for the survival of such creatures. In turn, larger predators would find their food supply affected and also struggle to survive.



Now that the wintry weather is on its way out and the colorful blooms will soon be back. It's time to think about spring cleaning. But while you're busy washing windows, scrubbing walls and dusting corners let Village Garden Center and Landscaping service give your outside the care it needs.

Our crew will pick up yard waste, limbs, branches and put nature back in order. There are many things to do before serious gardening weather arrives.

Edging, weeding applying pre-emergent weed killer and mulching is best done before March ends. This will ensure the best weed control. And once your perennials begin to grow they are able to push thru the newly mulched areas giving your beds a very neat and natural appearance.

Shrubbery, bushes and decorative plants need trimming to promote growth and to maintain proper shape. We expertly trim, treat and remove all trimmings.

Give us a call today to be put on our schedule a little effort in early spring can lay the groundwork for a thriving, healthy landscape-and have your neighbors turning green with envy.

Village Garden Center and Landscape Service is a full service landscape company. In business for over 40 years we specialize in hardscapes, water gardens, lawns (seeding, sod or hydroseeding, and all areas of landscaping.

We would love to work with you.

