



## A Personal Message

Ah, April. As I breathe a sigh of relief, memories of a really cold winter are starting to recede. And, my daffodils are almost ready to bloom. Not a bad trade-off.

We planted over 800 daffodils last fall. We're hoping for a big beautiful burst of color very soon. It's been difficult, waiting for them to bloom. We saw the stems erupting from the frozen ground in February and we've been eager for their arrival ever since.

Most of our regular readers are aware of my latest hobby. I am an avid angler. I eat, sleep and dream about fish these days. Melissa and I made an early season run to our camper-trailer in Ocean City several weeks ago. It was a cold weekend, but we had a ball!

I like to surf fish on Assateague Island. For my money, surf fishing is way more fun than going out on a boat. So, let me tell you about my newest purchase, which will, of course, assure me of a record catch in record time.

My 1990 Toyota 4Runner is a jeep-like vehicle with 150,000+ miles on her. Somehow, I managed to persuade Melissa that she was a real bargain at only \$4,000. Henceforth, we shall call her a Personal Fishing Vehicle or PFV. The Toyota, not Melissa.

The PVF can be thrown into four wheel drive and driven over sand dunes to prime fishing spots on Assateague. I'll have room for several tackle boxes and all my fishing rods, including the 12' surf fishing rod that my parents gave me for Christmas.

I may even outfit the PFV with a stove. How good would a fish taste if I caught it, cleaned it and cooked it right on the beach?

So, if you can't reach me on the weekends this summer, you'll know that my PFV and I are enjoying life on the sand dunes. Even if I don't catch anything, life is always better on the beach.

However, until then, we are busily preparing for the arrival of spring. Judging from the number of new gardens we're installing, the Eastern Shore is going to be a beautiful place to live this summer.

And, here's a personal observation. It seems that more people than ever are interested in growing some of their own produce this year. The economy may be dictating this to some degree. However, I think that many people want to enjoy the gardening process, especially when they know that organic produce is the end result.

Low maintenance plants such as lettuce and herbs are fun and easy to grow. Give them a try in your own gardens.



## April Garden Tips

- As you begin to prepare your gardens and landscape beds, don't forget to add organic matter to the soil. We have bags of compost that we use in our own gardens. Give us a call for more information.
- April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Earth Day. Volunteers will clean littered beaches, plant trees and perform a variety of "green" projects across the country. However, you can do your part right here at home. Why not plant a shrub or a tree in a bare spot? Even small projects can help our environment.
- Try to avoid walking on wet soil in the garden. It compacts the soil, making it difficult for plant life to break through the hard crust.
- Before you plant, please be sure to clean out the debris that winter has left behind. Even gardens and landscape beds need a "spring house-cleaning" before new plants are installed.
- This is a good time to divide hostas and other summer blooming plants. Wait until the first buds appear. Then you should be safe to divide your plant material. You'll be amazed at the extra plants you'll have...and they're FREE!
- Last spring, we tested the theory of succession gardening. We installed plants over the course of several months. The results were stunning. We had color in our gardens until November. It was wonderful!



## Greenhouse Update

We would love to give you some suggestions for plant material this spring. During the winter, we've been busy in the greenhouse.

Azaleas are beginning their stunning show. Hostas will be ready for planting soon. And, there are lots of perennials that are promising many seasons of beautiful growth.

**Hostas--variegated green and cream foliage--perfect plants for shady areas.**

**We have non-variegated too.**

**\$10.00 each**

**Daylilies--standard orange--and we have miniature varieties too.**

**They bloom with the tiny yellow flowers.**

**\$5.00 each**

**Geraniums--many beautiful assorted colors. We're experts at growing geraniums.**

**\$6.00 each**

Lots of perennials are growing in the greenhouse. Most of these items will be ready later this month:

- Monarda (Bee Balm)
- Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan's)
- Leucanthemum (Shasta Daisies)
- Perovskia (Russian Sage)
- Salvia
- Echinacea (Purple and Yellow Coneflowers)
- Azaleas
- Passion Flowers

We're also trying our hands at several different annuals, herbs and vegetables. Take a look:

#### **Annuals:**

Cleome	Lobelia
Cosmos	Marigolds
Impatiens	Vinca

#### **Vegetables & Herbs:**

Anaheim Peppers	Creeping Thyme
Cayenne Peppers	Cucumbers
Coriander	Roma Tomatoes

All plant material was grown in Maryland and adapts well to our climate. Our plants were not trucked in from Florida or Mexico. Call the office and we'll make sure we have samples brought up from our greenhouse. Call for prices.

## Proper Mowing Techniques

The initial cut of your lawn this spring should be fairly short. The same goes with the final cut of your grass next fall. We generally recommend that these cuts be made at about 2 inches.

However, this is the ONLY time that you'll ever hear us suggest a lower mowing height. Numerous studies have shown that shallow mowing heights result in a weakened root system.

The impact of shallow, weak root systems is most apparent during summer; weather becomes hotter, drier and stays consistently dry. Soil becomes arid and stays that way, even during summer rainstorms when it's usually only the topsoil that gets any moisture.

When soil dries out, closely mowed lawns usually exhibit stress first and the loss of turfgrass plants is more likely. Higher mowing heights during the summer period will keep soil temperatures cooler, preserve soil moisture and help maintain turfgrass quality. We generally recommend a mowing height of 2 ½ - 3 inches for grasses that are used in the Mid-Atlantic region.

## Sweet Peas

One of the gardening websites that we love features Sweet Peas as the flower of the month. After reading about this versatile plant, we decided to include it in our own gardens this year. Just remember that they're poisonous, so no snacking!

Sweet peas are best known for their great beauty both outdoors and in floral arrangements. They prefer soil that is moist to the touch. It's best to plant sweet peas from seed. If cut often or pinched back, they will bloom more frequently.

Use a climbing variety against a fence. Or plant them at the base of another bush, such as lilac, for an added burst of color.

Sweet peas are a natural pollinator so they also do well in a vegetable garden. They're especially good near snap beans.

## Lawn Mowing Services Now Available

Please keep us in mind for your grass cutting needs this spring. Our two new Bob-Cat mowers will make short work of an unruly lawn.

Bob-Cat mowers are commercial grade equipment that boasts a zero turn radius. This means that our operators have independent control over each wheel. Zero turn radius is preferable for our use because it cuts down on mowing time.

We also purchased a 70" deck so that we can fly over those broad expanses of your lawn. And, we have small, push mowers, weed-eaters and backpack blowers so that we can provide you with that final polished look. Give us a call for a free estimate.