

A Personal Message

Summer is in full swing and I couldn't be happier. I'm spending lots of time finding fruits of the season and canning or drying them. Guess you could say I'm like a busy squirrel, preparing for the colder months that are sure to come.

Years ago, my parents gave me a 40 quart pressure cooker. I'm making good use of it by canning tomatoes and corn this year.

They also gave Melissa a food dehydrator. For those of you who may not be familiar with one, it looks like a big microwave oven. Melissa's dryer has nine racks and she's always drying fruits or herbs. This year, we planted an abundance of herbs. So, when we use dried basil, dill or oregano next winter, we'll have the satisfaction of remembering where the plants came from.

Are you having trouble keeping your plants happy this summer? We like to boost our plant material with compost tea. We brew the tea here on the property. It's natural and organic and our gardens can't live without it. We began using compost tea in conjunction with our natural/organic lawn care program several years ago. Now, we also offer a natural root and natural plant spray for your landscaping shrubs and flowers. It really makes plants and shrubbery come alive.

Compost tea is an aerobically brewed liquid extract made from compost. It has a pleasant earthy smell, which is not overpowering.

Bacteria and fungi grow in the brewer because the water is aerated, a food source (we use kelp) is provided and an active compost (worm castings) have been added. Additionally, we add liquid garlic to some brews as a natural insect deterrent.

Quite often, when you purchase plant material from a garden center, it's been sprayed with liquid nitrogen. Nitrogen can enhance plant growth, but it tends to make a plant too leggy and doesn't add the necessary nutrients.

If you would like a complimentary gallon of our compost tea to treat a potted plant or two, please let us know. Call the office at **410.770.5882** to make sure we're brewing tea that day.

You'll need a plastic jug for the tea. Make sure you use the tea that same day. Our tea only has a shelf life of 18-24 hours. But, it's well worth the effort. Your plants will jump for joy.

I hope you're having a wonderful summer. Let us know if we can help with any outdoor projects this season.

Garden Tips

- Gator bags provide a wonderful way to keep your trees watered during hot weather. There are several different sizes for smaller or larger trees. You've seen them secured to the trunk of a tree. They release water slowly into the ground, during the course of a 24 hour period. These bags water the root ball deeply, which is best for the health of the tree. If you're growing tomatoes, now is the time to stake them. We prefer the tomato cages because they offer more support. Just make sure you don't leave them blowing in the wind because tomatoes are top-heavy and won't last without support. One of our favorite gardening websites suggests that you not pinch azalea or rhododendron buds back after the 2nd week in July. They begin to set their blooms for next year.
- All of our internet gardening websites suggest that you vigorously deadhead your annuals during this month. You'll probably see another month or two of bloom time. Perennials should be deadheaded now also.
- Keep weeding. Or, let us apply pre-emergent and mulch to your gardens. Pre-emergent may help to cut down on future weed growth by up to 70%.

COME SEE US!

I have a huge announcement to make. For the past two years, we have been making major improvements to our space here on the outskirts of St. Michaels.

For two years, I've been writing about the grandiose plans I had for this property. I wrote about the white picket fence I wanted to build. I told you about the grand gardens that Melissa and I hoped to have. I said that we wanted stone walkways instead of dirt and gravel.

Well, it's finally happening. Our **white picket fence** now borders the perimeter of our property. And, it's gorgeous! The gardens look beautiful and the walkways are complete.

Our fence still shines a pristine white after a fresh coat of paint. It will fade somewhat with the dust and dirt of road traffic, but for now, it's bright as a new penny. It's actually a cedar fence that we built and then painted white. Remember, we designed the fence ourselves.

Inside the fence are our gardens. We also designed them ourselves. Our in-house designer did a beautiful job of transitioning the four separate beds in front of the house.

One bed is a rose garden. The trailing roses will soon be seen growing over the fence as the garden grows and matures. The different colors of roses are reflected in other plant material throughout the gardens. We have a perennial garden which features plants we grew in our greenhouse. We planted **Echinacea (Purple and Yellow Coneflowers)**, and **Monarda (Bee Balm.)** We also featured **mini daylilies** and **Leucanthemum (Shasta Daisies.)** This garden really showcases our strong, healthy greenhouse plant material.

Additionally, we purchased specimen plants from local nurseries. One bed features a **Weeping Cherry Tree**. We wish we could have enjoyed it this spring, but it will be there for many years into the future. Another one of our front beds has an Oriental theme. There's a **Japanese Red Maple** that anchors the garden. A riverstone bed flows away from the tree toward the center of the gardens. The round white riverstone is in perfect contrast to the squared off corners of the Belgian cobblestone that border the gardens..

Nandina (Heavenly Bamboo) is planted through this garden and **Black Mondo grasses** dot the border. We used a premium mulch called **Pine Fine** to complete all of the landscape beds.

The borders and walkways are also very special. **Patio flagstone** winds gracefully through the front of the property. It's set in stone dust, so it won't shift during rainstorms. Even though we used irregular sizes of stone for aesthetic purposes, the walkways are firm and flat. Melissa has a walking disability, but has no problem navigating our new walkways.

We used **white Belgian cobblestone** to outline the four major gardens. Different sizes of cobblestone form a raised center circle. We laid them upright to add height to our design. This same white cobblestone is also laid along the borders of our side gardens. It makes an unusual edging that guarantees soil won't wash away. These gardens are the first thing that you see as you enter the parking lot of our property.

Our beautiful fence showcases our woodworking capabilities. Our stonework is exquisite. You'll love the white Belgian cobblestone and irregular flagstone walkways. The gardens are beautiful and I know you'll enjoy seeing the design.

I'd like to extend an invitation for you to visit. If you're in the area and would like to see our walkways, gardens and fence, please stop by. We look forward to the opportunity of seeing you!