

Honey Rock News

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A garden is evidence of faith. It links us with all the misty figures of the past who also planted and were nourished by the fruits of their planting.

- Gladys Taber

Greetings;

Well it's that time of year; fluctuating temperatures, longer days and your Honey Rock newsletter! We hope this finds you healthy, happy and ready to garden!

It seems we're all concerned about the economy (as we should be,) but if you're a gardener you're one step ahead. What a satisfying feeling it is to pick your own sun-warmed home grown tomato! Nothing compares to the flavor of strawberry preserves from your organic patch. If you grow your own herbs you have healthy, tasty additions to your meals, not to mention medicines, teas and gifts for family and friends. You know how these treasures are grown, when and how they were harvested and processed. You are also helping the environment. If you grow organically you're not polluting the soil and waters with chemicals and your produce didn't have to travel hundreds of miles to get to your table. All this and you've made a beautiful landscape right at your fingertips! Sounds like a win win situation to me. I will admit gardening can be hard work. There are disappointments, but I won't say failures because we learn from our mistakes. If you haven't learned from yours, I'll share mine.

If you haven't gardened, now is the time to start. Make it easy on yourself. Start with a potted plant on your patio, or kitchen window. You won't be sorry.

In the Garden

I've started this letter the coldest day of the year so far (it's 14 degrees,) so it's hard to think about gardening. I did start some perennial herb seeds yesterday in the greenhouse. I love greenhouse work especially this time of year when the soil is too cold to work outside, but there is nothing like working in the garden! In the greenhouse I feel like I'm imitating nature. In the garden I feel I'm helping out, but I'm also learning. In nature nothing is left over. Everything from dead leaves to the bones of dead animals is recycled back into the chain of life. We should take a lesson from nature. We've been a throw away society too long and we're paying for it. We can produce less trash by reusing, repairing, recycling, composting and watching our purchasing habits.

Since gardening seems to be the theme of this letter I'd like to “re-share” one of my favorite songs with you.

Inch By Inch

*Inch by inch, row by row. Gonna make this garden grow.
Gonna mulch it deep & low. Gonna make it fertile ground.
Inch by inch, row by row. Please bless these seeds I sow.
Please keep them safe below, till the rain comes tumblin down.*

*Plant your rows short or long. Season with a cheerful song.
Mother Earth will make you strong, if you give her loving care.
Old crow watching from a tree. Got his hungry eye on me.
In my garden I'm as free, as that feathered thief up there.*

*Pulling weeds, picking stones. We are made of dreams and bones.
Need a spot to call my own. The time is close at hand.
Grain for grain, sun and rain. Find my way in natures chain.
Tune my body and my brain, to the music of the land.*

By David Mallet

In the Kitchen

Keeping with our garden mode, try this...

Fresh Garden Pasta

- 4 medium tomatoes, peeled & seeded
- 1 medium cucumber, seeded
- 1 small green pepper, seeded
- 1 onion, sliced
- ¼ cup snipped parsley
- fresh herb dressing (below)
- 8 oz. spaghetti or fettuccine
- 1 cup feta cheese, crumbled

Dice tomato, cucumber, green pepper and onion. Put into a mixing bowl with parsley. Pour fresh herb dressing over vegetables. Toss to combine. Cover and chill. Cook pasta until tender. Drain and rinse in cold water. Put pasta in a large bowl. Spoon vegetables over the top. Sprinkle with cheese. Toss with dressing to coat.

Dressing: ¼ cup cooking oil, 1 tablespoon sugar, 3 tablespoons dry white wine, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, ¼ teaspoon fresh ground pepper, 1 tablespoon snipped fresh basil, 1 teaspoon salt, several dashes bottled hot pepper sauce.

Combine ingredients in a screw-top jar. Cover and shake well.

In the Greenhouse

As always, we have lots of healthy, happy organically grown herbs, veggies and flowers for you to give a good home. Remember our goal is to “sell happiness with every plant!”

In the Cottage

Jim and I have talked tirelessly over what we could/should offer in our Herb Cottage. Considering the state of the economy our goal to simplify, promote buying locally and American made. We're finding this a difficult task.

You will find great garden tools to make your chores easier. Check out our organic soil conditioners, insecticidal soaps and “potty” soil. We'll have our 3-Bee honey later this Spring. We carry a collection of Jim

Long's herb books. They're easy to understand, the price is right and we like Jim. You'll find a good selection of standard and decorative pots. So when you come to pick out your plants, don't forget to check out what's new in the Herb Cottage!

The Bee Yard

“Life is the flower for which love is the honey.”

Victor Hugo

Last year was a great honey year. We, well not we, our bees made 20 gallons of honey. As with gardening, beekeeping is work, but so worth it. We think of the delicious liquid gold we harvest, but the pollination is what is really important to all of us who like to eat!

Try this delicious rose petal honey. Be sure to use fragrant, organically grown rose petals.

Rose Petal Honey

- ¼ cup rose petals
- 1 cup mild-flavored honey

Carefully wash rose petals and let dry. Place them in an 8-ounce sterilized glass jelly jar. Gently shake jar to distribute the rose petals. Keep in a cool, dark place for at least 48 hours to give the rose petals time to permeate the honey.

Honey Rock Yoga

Our yoga teacher extraordinaire, Diane Wells, is still teaching yoga classes Tuesday mornings 8:30 to 10:00 and Wednesday evenings 6:00 to 7:30 at the Little House on the Hill. I love yoga and the many benefits the practice gives us. Diane explains “Yoga works the body and mind together, having an affect long after you walk away from your yoga mat. Strengthening the immune system, working with your own body weight in weight bearing exercises helping to ward off bone loss, using your breath to calm frazzled nerves and layers of embedded tension that create a state of unwellness.”

If you haven't practiced yoga before don't worry, Diane is very good about helping us as individuals. That's another reason I love yoga, it's not a competition. So join us for Honey Rock Yoga or get in touch with Diane at www.yogaraj.org or 865-274-1278.

Bay, Herb of the Year 2009

Yes, *Laurus nobilis* or bay laurel has been chosen by the International Herb Association as herb of the year. Bay is considered a tender perennial, but we've had ours outside in a protected area for over six years. I wouldn't advise leaving your bay outside through the winter unprotected. It's slow to grow, a little pricey and doesn't mind being brought inside. I think bay makes an easy topiary. I've used the thick glossy leaves in crafts from wreaths to nosegays. We also put leaves in flower and cornmeal to repel insects such as mealy moths. I was never a big user of bay in cooking until many of you told me you couldn't make chili or stew without adding a bay leaf or two. It does add a warm distinctive flavor to soups, stews, marinades, sauces and custards. Always put bay leaves in at the start of cooking and remove them before eating. It could hurt your throat if swallowed.

Bouquet garni can simply be a bouquet of herbs tied with a cotton string you may put in at the start of cooking and remove before serving. I like to put my herbs of choice in the middle of a unbleached coffee filter, bring up the sides and tie with a cotton string. There are many different recipes for bouquet garni, but they all seem to have bay leaf. As you know I like to use fresh herbs, but sometimes I'll make several bouquet garni bags with dried herbs to have on hand. I usually use bay, thyme, parsley, rosemary, and several peppercorns or dried chili peppers.

Maryville Farmers' Market

We can't wait until Saturday, May 2nd., opening day of the Maryville Farmers' Market located at Founders Square in

downtown Maryville. This gives us a chance to offer our herbs, veggies, and flowers to more people at one convenient location and we can purchase local fresh produce, eggs and flowers from other growers. We've developed such a close community with our fellow vendors. It's a wonderful feeling to know the good people our food comes from. Come enjoy the fun of the Maryville Farmers' Market, or you could be a vendor by filling out an application. Go online at www.maryvillefarmersmarket.org or pick up an application at the Blount County Extension Office. It's the place to be on Saturday morning!

What's Happening

Saturday, Sunday – March 28, 29 – 1 pm to 5 pm East Tennessee Daffodil Society Show. Ellington Plant Science Building, University of Tennessee Ag. Campus. Contact Lindsay Long at 865-675-2653 for more info.

Saturday, April 4th. 9 am to 5 pm “Herb and Wildflower Day,” Townsend Visitors Center, Townsend TN. Contact Jennie Hilton at 865-448-6134 for more info.

Saturday, April 11th. 10 am to 5 pm our annual CABIN FEVER & OPENING DAY at Honey Rock. You may have noticed we're opening later this year. “We'll explain in the Conclusion.” Get out of the house, have your spring tonic of sassafras tea. See what's growing in the greenhouse, the garden and what's new in the Herb Cottage. As always we'll be available to answer questions you might have about bees, organic gardening, growing herbs, etc. (The best we know how.)

Saturday, April 25th Sevier County Master Gardener Annual Flower and Garden Show & Sale. Sevier County Fairgrounds, Sevierville, TN. For more information contact Janet Banks at 865-774-8410 or jbanks98@bellsouth.net.

Saturday May 2nd. Opening of the Maryville Farmers' Market. 9 am to sellout. We're located near Founder's Square in downtown Maryville.

Saturday, June 20th. "Lavender Festival" at Historic Jackson Square, Oak Ridge, TN. 8 am to 3 pm. For more info call Barbara at 483-0961 or 800-278-1001.

That's what happening for now. We'll know more as the year goes on. Check your Hon E-mail.

Conclusion

As we said in What's Happening we're opening a little later this year. One reason is our plants are not quite ready to be planted in March (you know how I am about letting my plants go before they're ready,) and spring weather is so "iffy" in Tennessee. We also plan to attend an organic gardening retreat where we hope to learn some new ideas that we look forward to sharing with you.

Our Cabin Fever Day, April 11, starts our year with regular hours; we will be open Tuesday thru Saturday 10 am to 5 pm through

June. Until April 11 and after June we'd be tickled if you would like to call (865-984-0954) to tell us you're coming.

While you're here for Cabin Fever Day (and after) you may want to peep in our Trash and Treasure room at the Little House on the Hill. We've cleaned out the Herb Cottage as well as our closets, drawers and attic. You may find some treasures you can't live without.

We're looking forward to seeing your friendly faces soon. We've missed you as much as we've missed spring. Please keep us informed if you've had a change of address or if you no longer want to be on our mailing list. It would save postage and trees. If you're not on our Hon E-mail list and would like to be send us an e-mail at honeyrock@ntown.net. Until we see you...

Peace and Plenty

D. & Jim

