

# Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 3

*Fall Edition*

September 2010

## Another Special Visitor

Do you know who this is? Well I didn't at first, but after taking pix & video I was able to identify this bird. It's a female **QUAIL!!** How exciting is that? I was in complete awe to have this incredible member of WILDLIFE in my presence. Of course, I was equally thrilled with the Redtail Hawk who stopped by for a visit last year.



Ahhhh, nature is indeed a wondrous thing! I'll continue to be on the lookout for more interesting visitors & share my photos with all of you! Have a happy fall season!

## *In This Issue*

*\*Warm Up the Nights!*

*\*Fire Pit Rules*

*\*Wood Ash Improves Your Soil*

*\*Gardener Gatherings*

## Warm Up the



# Nights!



This issue is all about how to enjoy **FIRE SAFELY** in our gardens.

On this subject...I **have** to admit I'm a **pyromaniac!** Ever since 6th grade camp, where I learned to **SAFLEY** make a fire, **I was hooked!** Maybe, it was the warmth, flickering/color of the flames or scent of smoke. Whatever it was, I just couldn't get enough! Upon my return, I scoured my neighborhood gathering sticks/twigs/branches or **ANYTHING** & I could burn. My parents, were **NOT** happy with my new found passion!

If you're still not convinced about the allure of fire, host a **FALL** bonfire party! Take note where your guests gather. Maybe some of you are blessed with an **INDOOR** fireplace.....(**REAL** or **GAS!**) Again, notice where people congregate at your indoor functions. Fact is **PEOPLE** are **drawn** to fire as much as they are to water. By including this wonderful element into our gardens, we can create drama, entice a mood, add warmth/character or scent (cook-out or scented

candles) to any outdoor room or patio setting.

## How FIRE Enhances a Garden

**Establish a Mood.** If you say "candlelight dinner," odds are you'll think of romance. While "torchlight procession," suggests a solemn occasion. Both statements set a mood. Candles underscore the point that "this is special, this is important." By the same token, other types of "fire lighting" set a mood in the garden. Using torches or lanterns will give off a brighter glow. Depending on what mood you're going for, you can control the intensity simply by adding or subtracting to their numbers. If bugs are a problem, light torches with citronella oil.

**Add Warmth.** As the cooler temperatures of fall approach, there's no need to start your winter hibernation just yet. The warmth & attraction of a fire can help you sustain your outdoor fun late into the coldest of autumns. Just think how nice it is to enjoy a hot cup of cider in front of the fire on a crisp fall evening.

**Serve As a Focal Point.** Light a fire in a fire pit, & it automatically takes center stage. Maybe you have a special ornament in the garden you'd like to showcase. You could use a solitary candle to illuminate it. Or, highlight a larger feature by surrounding it with several candles. If wind is a concern, look for a sheltered spot. Otherwise, you can use a covered lantern or enclosed candleholder instead.

**Get Cooking!** We CAN'T overlook this most important aspect of fire in the garden. Summer cookouts are the surest way

to please a fussy eater & the friendliest way to get to know your neighbors. Built-in barbecues look good even when they're not in use.

## Fire Photo Gallery



This portable Rustic Pit set comes with a grill top, screen & poker stick



Halloween's almost here....line a path with carved pumpkins!



Fire Pit as art OR focal point This one's GREAT! It's made from a recycled propane tank!



Garden path by candle light.... how romantic!



Tiki Torches have come a long way. Check out the new sleek designs!



And .....the stone patio built-in fire

# FIRE PIT



## RULES



Having a bonfire is a lot of fun, but it can also be dangerous if precautions aren't taken. Most of these are plain **COMMON SENSE**. However, there may be a few that you haven't considered.....so here they are:

\*Keep your fires small, & don't let them get too **HIGH** or out of hand.

\***NEVER** use gasoline or other highly flammable liquids to start or keep your fire going.

\*If your fire pit has one, use the spark screen.

\*Keep a hose, fire extinguisher or bucket of sand nearby to douse the fire when you're done. Stir, & douse it again with water. Make sure your fire is completely out before leaving it unattended.

\***NEVER** leave fires unattended.

\*Don't burn when it's dry (drought conditions) or windy.

\*Check local ordinances. Some communities **prohibit** fire pits.....contained or otherwise.

\***NEVER** use a metal fire pit on a wood or synthetic deck. **ALWAYS** place them on a hard level surface.

\*Don't stack your firewood too close. Put it **upwind** so sparks won't fly into your pile.

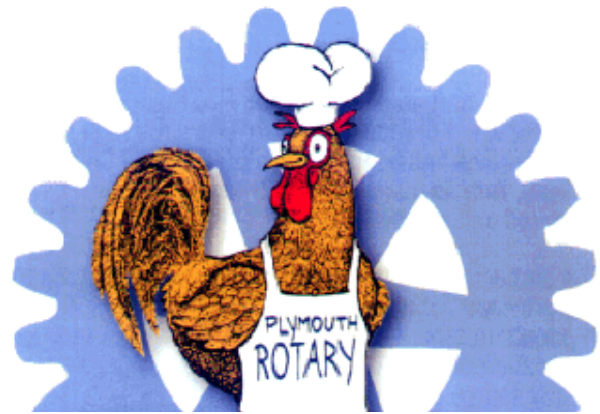
\*Teach kids how to stop, drop, and roll if their clothing catches fire.

\*Keep the fire away from the house, garage, deck and other flammable items.

\*Remember.....**HEAT** can damage plant foliage, so choose a site far enough away from plantings.

## *Plymouth Rotary Club*

### *55th Annual*



## **CHICKEN** *Bar-B-Que*

Kellogg Park/Downtown Plymouth  
**Sunday, September 12th 2010**

11:00 am to 5:00 pm *(or until sold out)*

Tickets: \$10.00 (presale)     \$12.00 (day of)

Contact Plymouth Chamber of Commerce

**734-453-1540** for details

# Wood Ash Improves Your Soil

Ashes from fire pits or the fireplace are an organic treasure for your garden. They're a good source of potassium, phosphorus & micro-nutrients, depending on the type of wood burned. Wood ash does NOT however, contain nitrogen. The organic matter of wood ash helps increase the good bacteria action in garden soil & promotes healthy plant root growth. If your soil has a potassium deficiency, wood ashes can be a good amendment. Here are some tips on amending your soil with wood ash

- Don't use wood ash around acid loving plants like rhododendrons, azaleas & evergreens.
- Wood ash contains lye, & should not be spread near young, tender garden plants or on tender roots.
- Add wood ash to the compost pile. Spreading ashes between layers of compost helps neutralize over-acidic compost, speed up the decomposition process, introduce helpful bacteria to the compost, & keep down any odors.
- Use wood ash as an organic pesticide. Simply scatter them around plants to deter slugs, snails & cutworms. These pests hate to crawl across the crunchy wood ashes. They can also repel bigger pests like rabbits & deer. The wood ashes will need to be replenished after each rain for maximum pesticide effectiveness.
- **NEVER USE**—Coal ashes, Charcoal Briquettes, or ashes from wood if any type of fuel or wood preservative was used on the wood. Also avoid ashes from slow burning commercial wood log products. These contain wood binding agents & chemicals that are harmful to soil & plants.

Bottom line is that a small amount of wood ash will add some nutrients & be beneficial to most soils, however large amounts should be avoided.



## Gardener Gatherings Places To Go Things To Learn



### What & Where

#### Trailwood Garden Club Fall Plant Exchange

**September 11th 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM**  
Kellogg Park (corner of Union & Ann Arbor Trail)  
call Darlene 734-459-7499 for directions & info

#### Dearborn Heights Fall Plant Swap

**September 18th 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM**  
at Dearborn Heights Canfield Center  
call Judy 313-478-6098 for directions & info

#### News Herald Fall Plant Exchange

**September 18th 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM**  
at One Heritage Drive  
call Paul 313-719-1181 for directions & info

#### Tollgate Fall Fair

**September 20th 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM**  
at MSU Tollgate Gardens  
call 248-347-3860 for directions & info

#### Novi's Fall Perennial Exchange

**September 25th 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM**  
at Fuerst Park (bet. Novi Rd. & Taft Rd.)  
call 248-735-5245 for directions & info

Contact us at 734-416-0866 or [sandra@earthenjoycom](mailto:sandra@earthenjoycom)