

Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 1

Spring Edition

March 2011

Luck O' The Irish

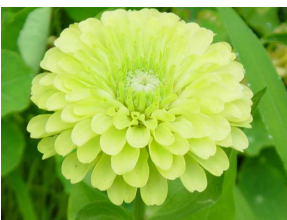
Show your Irish spirit this St. Patrick's Day with green-blooming flowers. I have a few to recommend. These plants will make the neighbors "green" with envy as you add some Irish flair to your garden.



Bells of Ireland (*Molucella laevis*). Sturdy spikes on this annual are covered with wide open green calyces shaped like bells.



Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea* 'Green Envy'). Unusual lime green daisy-like flowers with rose pink rays at the centers. Large cone-shaped center is dark green & lime green. Long lasting flowers, on strong stiff stems, perfect for cutting. A very unusual & spectacular plant for your garden.



Zinnia (*Zinnia elegans* 'Envy'). This magnificent lime-toned, zinnia will reach its deepest green tone if planted in part shade.

Savvy Shopping Getting the Best on a Budget

Gardening can be costly. Before you even start your garden you'll need tools, soil, fertilizer, flowers, plants & seeds. Stocking up on all these items can quickly push you over your budget. With knowledge & careful shopping, however, there's lots of ways to make your "seed" money go much farther.

• Timing is EVERYTHING

Shop on weekday mornings. This will get you the freshest plants. It also helps to develop a relationship with the nursery staff. They can give you "inside info" to upcoming sales & clearance items. Going local is another great way to get bargains. Your farmers market is a great place to get EXCELLENT deals on locally grown



Spring Blessings!

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PHENOLOGY

NO, this term is NOT to be confused with *Phrenology* which is the study of someone's skull to determine their character & mental capacity.

So then, what exactly is **Phenology** & what does it have to do with gardening? Well, quite a lot actually. I hadn't heard this term until I attended a trade seminar last month. I was intrigued because the title included the tag line "indicator plants in the landscape". I don't mean to be going all "scientific" on you this season, but for some reason those were the bulk of the classes I attended. I'm just sharing some of the info I learned. In the fall, I'll be discussing the "science of fall color", so I hope you stay with me as I make some "scientific discoveries" this season!

Phenology is another term for "nature's calendar". We all have an idea of when cherry trees will bloom, robins build their nests, leaves turn color in fall, birds migrate & bears hibernate. This schedule is critical for everything....plants, animals, & people. When a caterpillar emerges, it needs new leaves to eat. When a chick hatches, it needs caterpillars & other food sources. For many people, allergy season starts when certain flowers bloom....earlier flowering means earlier allergies. Not to mention, changes in flowering impacts the timing & intensity of the pollen season. Allergy sufferers be aware!

Farmer's gardeners & landscapers rely on this system too. Some phenological responses are triggered principally by temperature, while others respond more

to day length. As a gardener, knowing when to plant & avoid frosts, as well as knowing the schedule of both plant & insect development is valuable. It helps myself & those in the industry decide when to apply fertilizers & be on guard for pest so the appropriate pesticides can be applied. In fact, phenology affects nearly all aspects of the environment, including the abundance & diversity of organisms, interactions with one another, functions in food chains & seasonal behavior. Also included are the global cycles of water, carbon, & other chemical elements. The timing of phenological events is important for:

- Health (allergens & infectious diseases)
- Recreation (wildflower displays & fall colors)
- Agriculture (planting & harvest times, pest control)
- Management of natural resources (water & timber)
- Understanding hazards (monitoring & prediction of drought & fire risk)
- Conservation (abundance & diversity of plants & animals)

Phenology plays a role in human culture as well. Festivals are held around the world to celebrate annual phenological events such as:

- animal migrations** (whale, bats, cranes)
- flowers in bloom** (tulip, lilac, roses)
- food & harvest** (pumpkin, grape, garlic)
- aquatic** (oyster, crab, trout)
- fruit** (cherry, peach, apple)

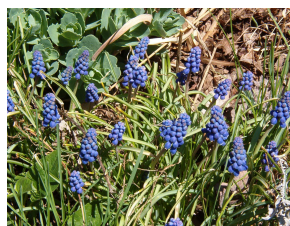
It's really quite amazing how many there are. All in all, a quick check of the farmer's

almanac will give you an updated “heads-up” for what kind of season we may be in for. Let’s hope it’s a good one!

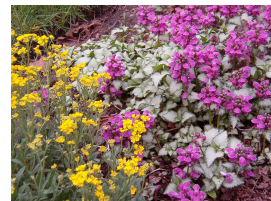
Gardening Trends for 2011

Here’s the top 7 gardening trends this year:

- Homeowners are growing more of their own food (herbs, vegetables & fruit trees)
- Backyard conservation creating habitats for birds, butterflies, & bees.
- People are implementing ways to manage their lawns & landscapes in a more environmentally friendly way.
- Opting for organic soils that are compost-based & premium-blended, for use in both containers & the garden
- Rain harvesting—use of rainbarrels to collect & reuse water instead of wasting it by letting it become runoff into the sewer system
- “Eco-scaping” which means, transforming lawn areas into a sustainable space in the landscape. The trend involves planting native species that are low maintenance, use less water & pesticides, attract beneficial wildlife & pollinators.
- Growing Vertical. This trend is hot for those living in apartments, condos & people in small spaces. It’s also perfect for elders, the disabled & teaching preschoolers garden basics. Growing food & natives in containers, up a wall, or on a fence we create beauty, add privacy...benefiting both our lives & the environment.



*The flowers of
late winter
& early spring
occupy places in our hearts
well out of proportion
to their size*



Gardener Gatherings

What & Where

Livonia Garden Club Plant Sharing

May 14th 9:00 AM 11:00 PM

at Historical Greenmead
call Liz at 734-425-6880 for details

Novi Spring Perennial Exchange

May 21st 9:00 AM 12:00 PM

Novi’s Fuerst Park
call 248-735-5621 for more info

MSU Tollgate Gardens Spring Plant Sale

June 4th 9:00 AM 2:00 PM

call 248-347-3860 for location & details

Contact us at 734-416-0866 or earthenjoy@wowway.com