



ALBERTA HORTICULTRUAL ASSOCIATION



February

May

August

November

IN THIS ISSUE:

Edmonton Urban Farm

AHA News

Local Business Feature

Bench Show Updates

Book Review

Gardening Techniques

Review: Edmonton Urban Farm

Edmonton Urban Farm is a two acre hidden gem in the center of Edmonton at 11312 - 79 Street. Explore Edmonton manages the farm. There are approximately 300 farmer/grower members in 25 different organizations with about 23 different languages spoken here. They grow many different varieties of vegetables, some unique and not commonly seen and beautiful flowers some that have volunteered and add color throughout the farm. The Farm has drop in hours on Saturdays (May - October) from 10 AM to 4 PM. On August 19 - 20, the Farm took part in Open Farm Days with different exciting activities. A number of the Farmers had entered the K - Days Competitive Exhibits, placed in some of classes and were overjoyed at their successes. This gave Explore Edmonton the idea to hold a small bench show just for the Farmers at Open Farm Days on Saturday, August 19. The Goal was to showcase many of their vegetables (some not commonly seen in Alberta Gardens) and to get some practice in preparing for a show and even be more successful next year at K-Days. Patty, Agriculture Education Specialist from Explore Edmonton contacted Karen to see if an accredited AHA judge would be available. I had the pleasure and privilege of being that judge. The bench show was set up outside and the weather cooperated. I talked to Patty before the show as to what is expected in the classes, how the entries should be staged, the Standards we use and the importance of listing the variety as this is education for the visitors. The morning started with a serene and moving Smudge Ceremony led by an Elder who explained the meaning and purpose so well. There were about 70 entries with about 25 classes and 10 exhibitors.

I was thoroughly impressed with the quality of the produce and varieties of vegetables that I usually do not see while judging bench shows. These unique vegetables, some a challenge to grow here were so well grown. To mention a few, there was Okra, Eggplant, Cheddar Cauliflower, Purslane, Kohlrabi, Tomatillos, Peppers (6 varieties of hot and sweet), Long, Red Tropicana Linga Onion, Squashes and Gourds and unique varieties such as Opo gourd (a long squash), Bitter Melon, Luffa Sponge, 3 varieties of large red Tomatoes, and 8 varieties of small Tomatoes, Watermelon, and Ground Cherry. I was impressed that 85-90% of the entries were a named variety. In the vegetable display, an entry in a large wicker basket with about 15 types and varieties of vegetables was stunning and artistically accented with some flowers and different types of kale. I conclude that these Farmers are ready for the K - Day Competition in 2024. Patty also asked that in early summer next year, she would like an AHA judge to come out and talk to the Farmers on exhibiting. The visitors were so excited and interested in the exhibits and especially in the varieties. Many were taking pictures of the show tags and entries so they would know the variety. It was a joy to see all that interest. Many were asking my assistant if the Farmers were here and could they talk to them on how to grow some of these vegetables and where to get the seeds. The organizers spoke to different media and I kept hearing them say "Marie from the AHA was here judging the bench show", so the presence of the AHA was appreciated here. In my adventure I was promoting the Mission and some of the Objectives of the AHA. My time here at Edmonton Urban Farm was well spent enjoying nature with other gardeners/farmers and visitors. -Marie Wenger

Bench Show Updates

The bench show season is drawing to a close, what a busy year. Bench show activities were in Wainwright, U. of A. Botanic Garden, Pivot Country, Camrose, Czar, Greenland Garden Centre, K-Days, Wetaskiwin, Irma, Vegreville, Dawson Creek, Loughheed, Coronation, Ranfurly, Pine Lake, Round Hill, Trochu, Carstairs, Wildwood, Priddis – Millerville, Edmonton Urban Farm, Darwell, Spruce Grove, Rumsey, Smith – Hondo, Lakedell and Sundre.

So exciting to see the variety of fruits, vegetables, and flowers that we can grow here in Alberta. There are so many amazing gardeners who grow these wonderful products and bring them to the bench shows for the public to enjoy. As an exhibitor myself, I absolutely know how much work goes into preparing the exhibits, displays, collections, bouquets, and arrangements.

Looking forward to another great year in 2024: One of the objectives of the Judging Standards Committee is to improve the standards of judging across the province. Ways we look at to do this are: Communication between the show committees and the standards committee, requesting certified judges for the bench shows, completing show reports (bench show committees), workshops (through the A.H.A), and judging workshops to train new judges.

On July 29-30, 2023 a judging workshop was held in Camrose. The two-day workshop was busy, a lot to learn and a lot to share. The attendees came from a wide range of horticultural knowledge and experiences. It was wonderful to share these experiences and knowledge. I certainly learned a lot from those who attended.

It was great to see new faces who value continuing on this program and the resource it provides to the province. The judging committee hopes to put on a workshop each year in a different community to increase the number of judges we have in Alberta. If you are interested in becoming an A.H.A. judge please let us know or if your affiliate club would host this event in 2024.

A big thank you to The Camrose Horticultural Society and Janine Carroll for hosting this year's workshop and for the kind hospitality. Also, a big thank you to Marie Wenger for being part of the judging committee and being a co-presenter at this year's workshop in Camrose. Marie and I were faced with a few last-minute challenges but are happy to say the weekend went very well.

The judging committee will be working on a suggestion guide for 2024. This guide is intended to help show committees, volunteers, exhibitors, judges, and the public understand the process for exhibiting and judging at horticultural bench shows. This guide will have suggestions brought forth from the exhibitors, judges and others on how to improve the overall experience for everyone involved in horticultural bench shows.

Thank you to the Stony Plain Horticultural Society for inviting an A.H.A. judge to speak at a general meeting of your club. These activities are a great way to answer questions about the judging program and exhibiting at horticultural bench shows. Thank you to Marie Wenger for representing the A.H.A. in Stony Plain.

Bench show reports (filled out by the show committee) annual reports (filled out by the affiliate club's executive), keeping in touch with your district representative, and renewing your annual membership: All of these help the A.H.A. as a whole. Report forms are available online or contact your district representative. If you are unaware of who your district representative is we can provide that information as well as their contact information.

Thank you to everyone for choosing an A.H.A. judge to participate in your 2023 bench show.

Karen Berglund
A.H.A. Judging Committee &
District 5 Representative

AHA News - New Treasurer - Sandra Murray

Pansies, sweet peas, hyacinths, and peonies... these were the flowers in our yard where I grew up. I still enjoy these plants but over 16 years of working at the Dunvegan Gardens Greenhouse in Grande Prairie, I had gained a wealth of knowledge about horticulture in general and perennial flowers in particular, having worked in that department all those growing seasons. About the same time as starting work at the greenhouse, I joined the newly formed Grande Prairie Garden Club. Over the years I took my turn in different leadership positions and always enjoyed the conversations and gardening tips from the wonderful people who were members. An offshoot 'adventure' of the Grande Prairie Garden Club was the Grande Prairie Community Garden that I also participated in. It was here I had the opportunity to assist in presenting at different promotional events, as well as giving reports on our progress at City Council meetings.

When the District 6 AHA Representative position opened, Lorna McIlroy, then AHA President and a member of the Grande Prairie Garden Club, asked if I would consider letting my name stand in the upcoming AGM, I said yes and have been learning about the great Affiliate societies, clubs, and associations in this northern District since then. This year I have been privileged to be voted into the AHA Treasurer position and I very much appreciate having the opportunity to serve the Association in this capacity. It is my desire to be trustworthy, efficient, and helpful in all my duties. I am looking forward to connecting with each of you throughout this new "season" in my life. Happy Gardening!

-Sandra Murray, AHA Treasurer

Book Review: The Potting Shed by Linda Joan Smith

As the days of summer draw to a close and the smell and look of fall are all around us, there are opportunities to sit back and relax a little bit. For the gardener the spring, summer, and fall are busy times. While I say that, I really don't think winter gives us much rest either. We are busy preparing for the following year. Sheds to clean, pots to sort, seeds, bulbs, tools and other assorted gardening necessities to look at and consider for what is needed for the next opportunity to sow and grow.

The opportunity to share this little book with you seems appropriate for this time of year when the short days bring us in from the garden before eleven PM.

The Potting Shed has been in my possession for about ten years now. I found this little gem at a second hand book store in Campbell River, BC. While walking along Pier Street on a cold rainy day I spotted this little book in a used book store window - noticed it straight away. The title drew me in, of course. For a couple of dollars I now have a book that I have looked at time and time again. The size of the book makes it perfect for my coffee table and the information is so interesting that it continues to keep my interest after so many years. Of course I have no way of knowing who donated the book, but I thank them for doing so.

The Potting Shed celebrates the history, practical needs and uses, the romance, intrigue and nostalgia of the potting shed.

Growing up on a farm on Vancouver Island, gardening was part of every day life. Our parents would have never considered not planting a substantial vegetable garden. Our parents, along with all their friends, planted and preserved everything possible. Of course today the varieties are endless of what is available to every gardener around the globe.

This little coffee table book is packed full of beautiful photos that evoke intrigue into other gardeners lives and family history of generations past. The book discusses the necessity of a good potting shed but also the quiet and calmness that working in a potting shed can bring. The quotations and information are of value to gardeners no matter where you live.

Our farm did not have a designated potting shed but there were always well maintained tools, sufficient pots, planters (Dad made most of the planters), seaweed, cow manure, seeds (mostly shared from friends). Later in my teens there was a tea house and a greenhouse. I would call the greenhouse the potting shed as the one wall was designated to the pots, trowels, planters, watering cans and what ever other little goodies that were needed for the family gardening in and out of the greenhouse.

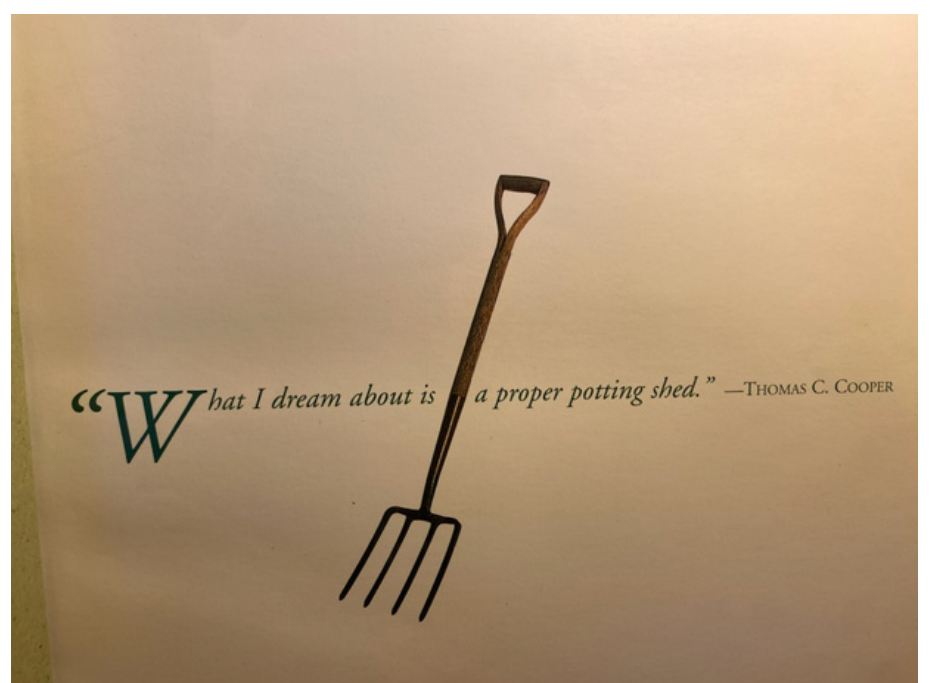
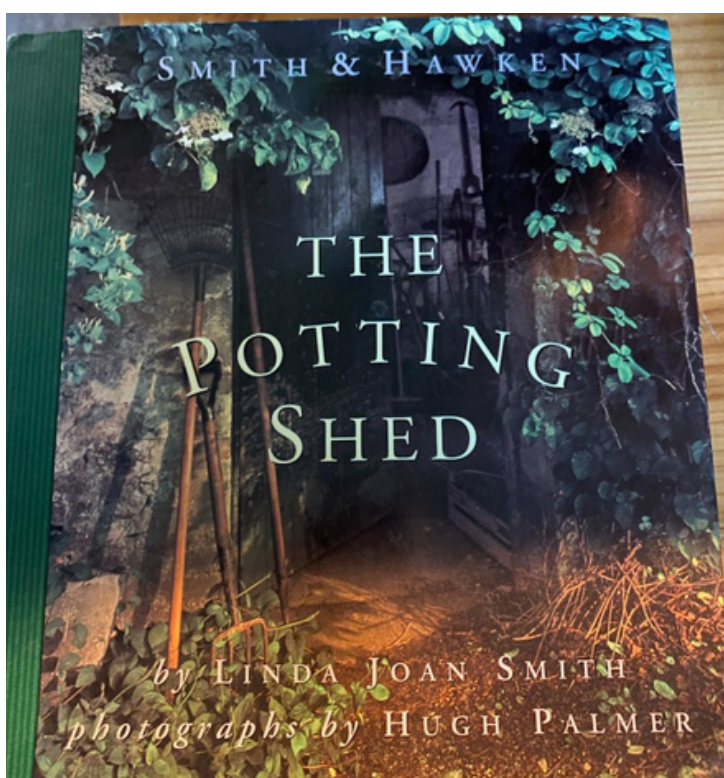
When the home was sold a few years back and the "potting shed" cleaned out, fond memories were certainly there of the countless hours spent gardening with my parents. My sister and I shared the tools, I think about my parents as I continue to use the tools everyday.

The house was sold to folks who also clearly love gardening and have put the potting shed and gardens back into full swing.

I would encourage everyone to set up a designated space in a shed, a greenhouse, or build something that this book may inspire you to do. History in the making.

As the fall draws us inside, give this little book a read. The Potting Shed is sure to inspire you. A 10 out of 10 for your winter "to do list".

-Karen Berglund



Local Business Feature

Saskatoon Valley Orchards is owned and operated by Keith and Karen Poirier. After moving to Alberta in 1984 from B.C. I have been introduced to many new plants. One of these prairie gems is the Saskatoon berry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*). The saskatoon is well adapted to the prairie environment. This native fruit tree is a must for folks wishing to grow some of their own fruit. If you have neither the space or desire let me introduce you to a local reliable source.

Saskatoon Valley Orchards is a family run business that began as a U-pick in 1999. Initially 11,000 saskatoon trees were planted and over the years more were added, the orchard houses an impressive 18,000 trees plus. The three varieties that are available in this expansive orchard are Smokey, Northline and Thiessen. Adding to the saskatoon rows are some beautiful black currants (also for U-pick sales). While picking saskatoons from the grass lined rows, it is something to look down the rows of trees and be taken in by the beauty of the orchard.

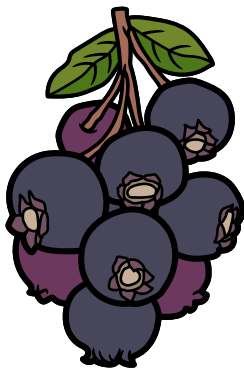
If you are interested in picking your own saskatoons or driving out (just past Stony Plain) to pick up a bag of frozen berries the drive in the country is worth the trip. If you venture out to Range Road 22 and Saskatoon Valley Orchards the saskatoons, black currants, two apple trees and treed farm are sure to impress.

The saskatoon harvester is used for pre picks and large orders. The berries are machine harvested early in the morning so the berries are available to the customers at opening time.

Hours of operation are from 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. seven days a week during the harvest season. Frozen berries are available throughout the winter months.

Give them a call if you need frozen saskatoon or are interested in their operation for the upcoming 2024 season.

Submitted by Karen Berglund



Saskatoon Valley Orchards
51512 Range Road 22, Parkland
County, Alberta
T7Y 2H9
780-963-8311

Gardening Techniques - Heeling In Plants for Winter

A late season perennial bed renovation, moving to a new home, and end of the season garden centre sales are all reasons why you might have plants needing a temporary home. Heeling in is a simple and fast way of storing hardy, dormant plants in the garden so they survive the winter.

Both bareroot stock and plants in pots can be heeled in. This includes herbaceous perennials and woody plants. Choose an in-ground location with well drained soil, that is sheltered and relatively free of perennial weeds. I usually use a row in my vegetable garden where there is open soil that is easily dug.

These are the basic steps:

1. Dig a trench. Make it deep enough for the whole root ball/pot to be set in below the soil level.
2. As you dig, pile the loose soil along one edge, above the trench.
3. Lay the plants in, with the roots reaching into the trench and the stems leaning against the trench wall above the soil line. The plants can be set at an angle, giving them some protection from winter winds.
4. Set plants close together, each pot touching the one beside it.
5. Backfill the trench with the soil you removed. Gently tamping around each plant. Using a shovel or the heel of your boot, lightly pack the soil to fill air spaces that can dry out the roots.
6. A layer of mulch, such as straw, dried leaves or grass clippings, compost, or wood chips, will help protect the roots, especially when there is no insulating layer of snow throughout the winter.
7. If the soil is dry, water the area so it is well moisten, but not saturated.
8. Next spring lift the heeled in plants while they are dormant and replant them in their permanent location.

In late October 2022 George Pegg Botanic Garden received a generous \$1,000.00 donation of potted perennials and shrubs from a local greenhouse. Just before the snow started, they were quickly heeled in, filling two 8 metre rows. All but three of the 60 plants survived the winter.

Lorraine Taylor
George Pegg Botanic Garden