



The catch this spring

by Deborah Quaille

Quaille Reviews



The Biggest Fish in the Lake is the newly illustrated book by Janet Wilson of Eden Mills, just released in April 2001. Wilson has used watercolours in this piece, a medium that lends itself well to the cottage-country nature of the pictures. Especially nice is the photo-style illustration of the hero, standing proudly on the dock with a big catch and an even bigger grin.

Fishing at Grandpa's farm has its own lure, no matter what the season. The delight the two main characters take in each other's company while spending some free time with a rod and line are the focus of the story. Told in the first person (we never hear the girl's name), the narrator reminisces about her times waiting for a strike, while telling stories, talking, or just gazing into the water and listening to the wind with her grandfather. With the gift of her own spinning rod for her birthday, the girl devotes her time to practising so that she can hit a target two out of three times. When she reaches that goal, the two of them will take a fishing trip when school is out.

But try as she might, the speaker can't catch the fish of her dreams, a big one like Grandpa can. Early one morning she slips down to the lakeside with her rod

and finds a large fish churning the water. Upon the third cast, a powerful underwater creature grabs her lure and gives her a chance to see what fishing for a big one is really like. It's a battle of wills to see who's strongest - in muscle and in heart.

Unknown to the girl, Grandpa is watching the whole proceeding. Together, the two characters remind readers that there is more to life than landing "the big one."

Wilson's portraits of cottage country are lovely, with plenty of authentic wildlife detail tucked into each one. The play of light on the water at different times of day and in different locales effectively changes the colour from page to page, adding depth to the feel of the story. The pearly pink and mauve shadows of early morning, with the mist rising from the water will remind everyone who has spent time up north of the delight such time at a lake can bring. The large granite rocks, vivid sunsets, and bent spines of pines turning from the west winds give the tale an authentic Canadian flavour.

THE BIGGEST FISH IN THE LAKE
WRITTEN BY MARGARET CARNEY
ILLUSTRATED BY JANET WILSON
TORONTO: KIDS CAN PRESS, 2001
ISBN 1-55074-720-7
H/C, \$15.95

Idle



Pursuits



Givin' you the dirt

by Sean James
The Compass

Spring start-up

Spring is here. Bulbs are emerging from the soil. Perennials are gearing up for another year. Sap is beginning to flow and we ARE desperately ready after the long winter.

What needs to be done to prepare your garden for the upcoming year? Pruning, clean up last year's perennial growth, edging, weeding, and mulching are the things.

It's almost too late for pruning but keep in mind the simple rules. With both shrubs and trees, remove the "three D's" ... dead, diseased and damaged growth. Remove interfering wood - wood which is rubbing against other wood. Prune for aesthetics taking into account balance, form, and the long term shape of the plant. (Pruning weeping shrubs is a whole article in itself!) Prune back to the next branch leaving no stubs. Leaving stubs an inch or two is a common mistake that will stop the plant from healing properly. The line to which you should prune is called the "growth ring." It's difficult to describe in writing, but where branches meet each other or meet the trunk the growth ring is visible as a swelling or wrinkling of bark, which contains hormones to heal the branch.

With shrubs, remove one third

of the eldest growth, cutting the branch all the way to the ground. Many overgrown, multi-stem shrubs can be coppiced, or pruned right to the ground. Coppicing rejuvenates the plant and can be done every three or four years.

There are two times NOT to prune ... when leaves are coming out and when leaves are dropping off. It is better to wait until the leaves are emerged in spring or have dropped in fall. Pruning is a fairly involved topic that is better demonstrated than written about.

The best route is to get a knowledgeable friend or landscaper to work along side you.. Some horticultural societies have speakers on pruning. Improper pruning does a lot of damage. Learn first and remember, "proper pruning promotes vigor."

Many gardeners cut perennials to the ground in the fall. It is better to leave this until spring. Stems and seed heads hold snow that shelters the plant. It also provides a home for beneficial predator insects such as the Preying Mantis. The old growth and seed heads look fantastic through the winter adding another dimension of interest to the garden. Get out and enjoy the first sunny, warm days cutting

perennial stems right to the ground using secateurs or hedge shears. Remove the old leaves and stems, composting them. Keep diseased leaves, such as those infected by powdery mildew, out of compost.

Many gardeners feel compelled to remove leaves around emerging bulbs. If you choose to do so, be gentle. While a thick blanket of leaves can distort new growth, don't be too uptight about the garden. Nature has a way of taking care of itself. Every year people call me wondering if they should cover their bulbs to protect them from cold snaps. I always tell them the bulbs can look after themselves.

Now is the easiest time to weed and edge your garden. Many perennial weeds such as dandelions are visible and easy to remove now as are winter annuals such as Shepherd's Purse. Edging gardens to a depth of three inches will prevent grass from escaping the lawn to invade the garden. This will save tons of work through the growing season. If you stay on top of your weeding for the first couple of months, you'll find the job gets easier throughout the summer and in consecutive years.

Spring is a great time to top-dress the garden with a couple of inches of compost. Forget about chemical fertilizing and add organic matter instead. It's much better for the garden, providing many benefits such as air and water infiltration, many micro- and macro-nutrients, better soil structure and a healthier soil ecosystem. Compost introduces beneficial fungi to the soil that can attack harmful fungi, other pathogens and insects. It's also great to apply compost on your lawn in a half-inch layer. Studies by the University of Guelph Turfgrass Institute have shown top dressing your lawn with compost helps fight fungal infection.

The hardest work of the year will soon be finished. Now you are ready to start planting your garden and enjoying the fruits (and flowers) of your labour.

WETHERBY'S
In the British manner

OPEN DAILY
Monday-Saturday 10 am to 5pm,
Sunday 12 to 5 pm

- Wheelchair Access •
- Call for our free mail order brochure

**149 Church Street East,
Acton, ON**
(519) 853-1633

**British gifts, books,
toys and foods**

Easter Goodies
English Chocolate
Easter Eggs
Jelly Babies
Chocolate Biscuits
Blancmange Powder
Lemon Sherbets
Pear Drops

SPECIALIZING IN SKIN CARE

SERENITY SPA

Esthetic services by appointment

150 Armstrong Avenue, Unit #9, Georgetown (905) 702-9744

LA VIEILLE AUBERGE

262 Main St. S, Rockwood
(519) 856-4170

Peter Appleyard Trio in Concert

Wednesday May 16, Thursday May 17, Friday
May 18, Saturday May 19. Price \$75 per person,
7 p.m. Reservations are required.

Don't forget Mother's Day!
Sunday, May 13
Fixed price menu - call to reserve.

"April in Paris"

at
Illusions
by
Jeanette Dodson
Interior Design

3rd Annual Open House & Sale
April 7 & 8, 12 to 6 p.m.
Refreshments

Silk Florals
Accessories
Antiques
Accent Pieces
Gifts
Interior Design
Weddings
Event Decorating
Gift Baskets

Open most weekends
Call for an appointment

RR#3, 10285 6th Line,
Georgetown
(905) 877-5496