

## Givin' you the dirt

By SEAN JAMES

### Watering practices

August is here and with it a few observations.

First, I have some introspection to share. Most of that which I write is based on my observations while driving around and while working.

Every once in a while, I just want to get out of the truck and show folks the error of their ways. Somehow I don't think that would go over too well though.

Then I realize that perhaps I can help rectify the situation by writing about it and spreading the knowledge around. There's a biggie this month...watering practices.

Many folks don't use water to their best advantage and many others actually do quite a bit of harm.

The best time of day to water is very early in the morning. Often, sprinklers and irrigation systems are seen running in the evening. This is probably because evening is when people have time to water and when the plants look the most stressed.

Evening watering leaves moisture on the plants all night and allows fungal diseases such as powdery mildew to thrive. Watering during the heat of day causes an extraordinary amount of your water to evaporate before it helps the plant. That's expensive and a waste of water.

Watering at dawn means the soil gets to absorb the water and water on the leaves will dry off soon in the sun's light. If your irrigation system (if you have such a creature), was installed by a knowledgeable professional, it is probably already set to come on at about 4 a.m. so it's finished by the time you get up. If not, fix it. If you don't have an

irrigation system, you can get some great timers made by Gardena which will make your life so much easier.

Water deeply! The best way to water is to give plants an inch of water once each week, if they need it. Don't water unless it's necessary.

Stick your finger in the soil. If it's cool and moist, it won't need water. For newly planted or stressed trees and large shrubs, set the hose to a very low trickle and lay the nozzle at the base of the trunk and leave it over night to soak the area thoroughly. Generally, standing there with the hose, watering a plant is, not the best use of your time or water.

Remember, if you choose your plants carefully for drought resistance, you may be able to get away with just spot watering the plants that are really beginning to suffer.

As far as turf goes, let it go dormant. Or better yet, replace as much as possible with mulched groundcover beds. In the long run it will reduce your work and add to property value.

Mulch as much of your gardens as possible with rich compost or cocoa mulch to reduce watering, keep the soil cool, reduce weeding and add organic matter to the soil. Mulching is the most important practice for the health and maintenance of the garden and yet so few people do it. Try to avoid the wood chip mulches.

If you have questions of a horticultural nature, e-mail me at [sdjames@on.aibn.com](mailto:sdjames@on.aibn.com). If it's of interest to the general public it may make it into the column.

## Donna Danielli's Just Kidding Around



There's still one more month to enjoy time with the family before school starts up again and everyone's lives become that little bit busier.

Try some of these great events before the summer ends and we can all start looking forward to the Fall Fairs.

Country Heritage Park offers **Cornfest** on August 10 and 11. Enjoy some sweet steamed corn, make corn brooms or a corn dolly. Hours are from 12-5 p.m. and Cornfest is included in the regular park admissions.

Enjoy **Ice Cream and Starlight at the Halton County Radial Museum** on Saturday, August 10 from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. This fun-filled family event is

included with Museum admission and you can find out more by calling 519-856-9802.

Crawford Lake's reconstructed Iroquoian Village becomes a very special place to be for the **Spirit Sings Event** on Sunday, August 18 from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. Join staff for a unique evening of traditional teachings, storytelling, and native games and challenges. Fee is \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors and students. Tickets are required and you can order them by calling 905-854-0234.

Are you afraid of the dark? Join Mountsberg staff for **Bat Night** to learn all about the fascinating, but often misunderstood world of bats. Held August 10 and 17 from 7-9 p.m., this family event

includes a puppet play, storytelling, and visiting with live bats up close and personal. Cost is \$10 for adults, \$7 for children 14 and under. Call 905-854-2276 to register.

The **Fergus Scottish Festival** is one of North America's oldest and largest games celebrating Scottish and Celtic culture and heritage. It offers dancing, music, genealogy and more. This takes place at the Fergus Community Centre from Aug 9 - 11 and you can find out more by calling 519-787-0099.

Well, that's it for another month. Hope that everyone has enjoyed their summer and I'll see you back here again next month with more family fun in North Halton.

## Dr. Bug's Bugbytes

By ROBERT CAMERON

### Pesky ants be gone

A very common problem experienced by homeowners is the appearance of small ants in various areas throughout the house.

There are many ways that these ants can gain entrance. In newer brick homes, common entry points are breather holes. These are gaps that are left at regularly spaced intervals along a course of bricks usually just above the foundation to allow moisture to escape from behind the bricks. Breather holes are also found above windows and doors but are not as accessible as the lower holes.

Small ants that are nested in

the ground near the house foundation will often find these breather holes and the entire colony will move into the house. Once they are behind the brick, they can move freely in any direction. Nests are often made where the main floor joists meet the outer wall. Bats of insulation are placed between these joists and the ants will nest behind this insulation. They will then start to appear around sliding glass doors and baseboards, eventually spreading throughout the house even on to upper floors.

This problem is sometimes caused by the installation of patios

at the back or sides of the house. Interlocking stones, patio slabs or flag stone are often placed over sand. This is a natural area for small ants to build nests. These patios are usually raised and often cover up the breather holes. Ants nesting in the sand against the foundation can enter the holes without even being seen from above.

Prevention of this problem involves inspecting the exterior periodically over the summer. If ant activity is noted near the foundation or in the patio, treat the nest sites and into the breather holes if necessary. If you are planning to build a patio against part of the house, then seal those breather holes that would be covered by the patio. If you are having a problem with small ants and have access to the ceiling in the basement, check behind the insulation bats between the joists for signs of ants. Limestone screenings, which are less attractive to ants, can be used as a base for the patio instead of sand.

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