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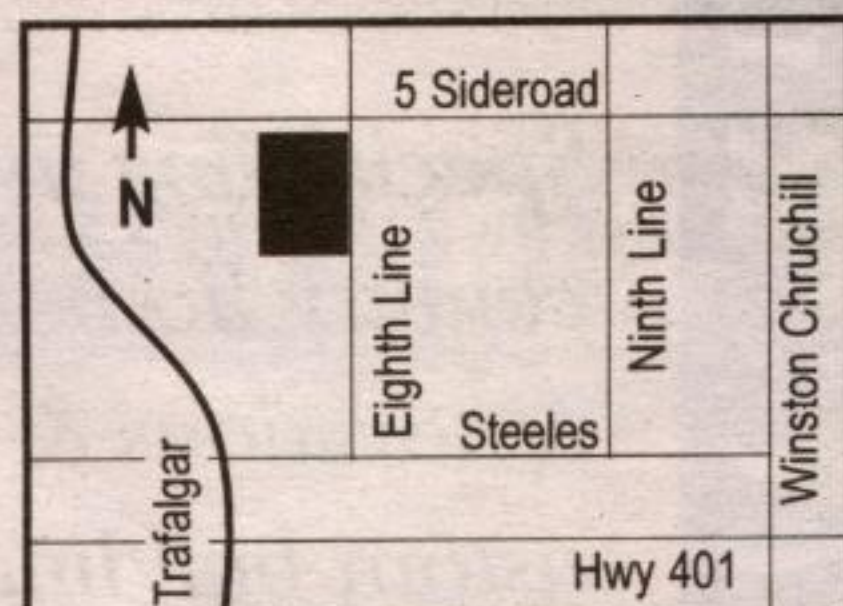
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**Givin' you the dirt: Gardening for munchkins**

By SEAN JAMES N.P.D. PRESIDENT OF FERN RIDGE LANDSCAPING



With so many young families moving into the area, an article on gardening projects for children seems like a necessity. Being from a small family myself, having no younger siblings or cousins, I thought it would be a good idea to enlist the help of a friend with a large family, someone with experience and perspective.

I had a great chat with Chase Lawton of Taylor Nurseries in Milton. My own, and only, great thought was to have kids grow seeds indoors. Chase is experienced enough to point out that, for most children, starting seeds may be fun but they often don't have the patience for the prolonged process, losing interest before the seeds germinate.

A better way to go is to take the kids to the garden centre and have them pick plants of their own. Annuals are good for them to start with because of the instant gratification and bright colours. They may need gentle suggestions on where to place

their new treasures. Most annuals will need to go near the front of the border for visibility. This may also serve to stop little feet from venturing deeper into the garden and stampeding through mom's mums. Another option is for the youngsters to plant their annuals in a simple clay pot on a patio or deck.

If you find your children inclined towards nature, set aside part of the garden as theirs and teach them how to maintain it. Alternatively, if your goal is to build family activities, the children can work with you in the entire garden. Keep an eye on them. If they seem to be getting tired or losing interest, give them a break or a different task. If gardening becomes too much work, you may undo some of the good without even realizing it. If parents are too territorial, it may scare the kids away from gardening. If you see them wanting to help, encourage them. "Otherwise they'll just go play video games."

Chase suggests: "Make it creative because, if you don't, the kids

won't enjoy what they're doing. If you want, you can get them designing the gardens from scratch with the shapes and forms of the beds." This process might be good for the parents as well.

The next step after success with annuals is perennial plants, which come back year after year. Encourage kids to roam through the garden center with you and help them pick a plant that will do well in your yard. Staff at the garden center can be a great source of knowledge when choosing perennials.

Eventually, the kids can even get into growing trees from seeds or saplings. Care of the young tree is important, especially weekly deep watering. Imagine a young adult saying, "I planted that tree when I was five," while looking up at a 15-year-old oak in the backyard. There would be a sense of accomplishment for you as well, knowing that you got your kids off on the right track, appreciating the works of Mother Nature and working together as a family.

**Dr. Bug's Bugbytes**

by ROBERT CAMERON



**How to fight the bite**

There is always a lot of discussion, controversy and misinformation about insect repellents. What works, what doesn't? Home remedies range from bear grease to geranium oil. Numerous studies have been done, and many articles have been written on this topic. A recent comparative study on insect repellents, by Mark S. Fradin, M.D., and John F. Day, Ph.D., was published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* on July 4, 2002. Their conclusion was that DEET-based products still provide the best protection against mosquito bites.

Many people express concern over the use of DEET and its possible side effects. DEET was developed by the U.S. government in 1951 after testing thousands of products for their effectiveness as an insect repellent. Numerous health-effects studies on DEET

have been conducted, and the Environmental Protection Agency in the U.S., after 11 years of independent research, has concluded that, "Normal use of DEET does not present health concerns to the general U.S. population."

Back to Dr. Fradin and Dr. Day: Their study examines protection time against mosquito bites. From best to worst, their results show: Deep Woods OFF (DEET, 23.8 per cent) gave an average of 300 minutes of protection; Sawyer Controlled Release (DEET, 20 per cent), 234 minutes; Bite Blocker for Kids (soybean oil, 2 per cent), 94 minutes; Natrapel (citronella, 10 per cent), 20 minutes; Herbal Armor (a mixture of citronella, peppermint, cedar, lemon grass and geranium oil), 19 minutes; Skin-So-Soft Bath Oil, 10 minutes; Repello Wristband (DEET, 9.5 per cent), 0.2 minutes. Their conclusions showed that higher concentrations of DEET provided longer-lasting protection, and repellent-impregnated wristbands offered no protection.

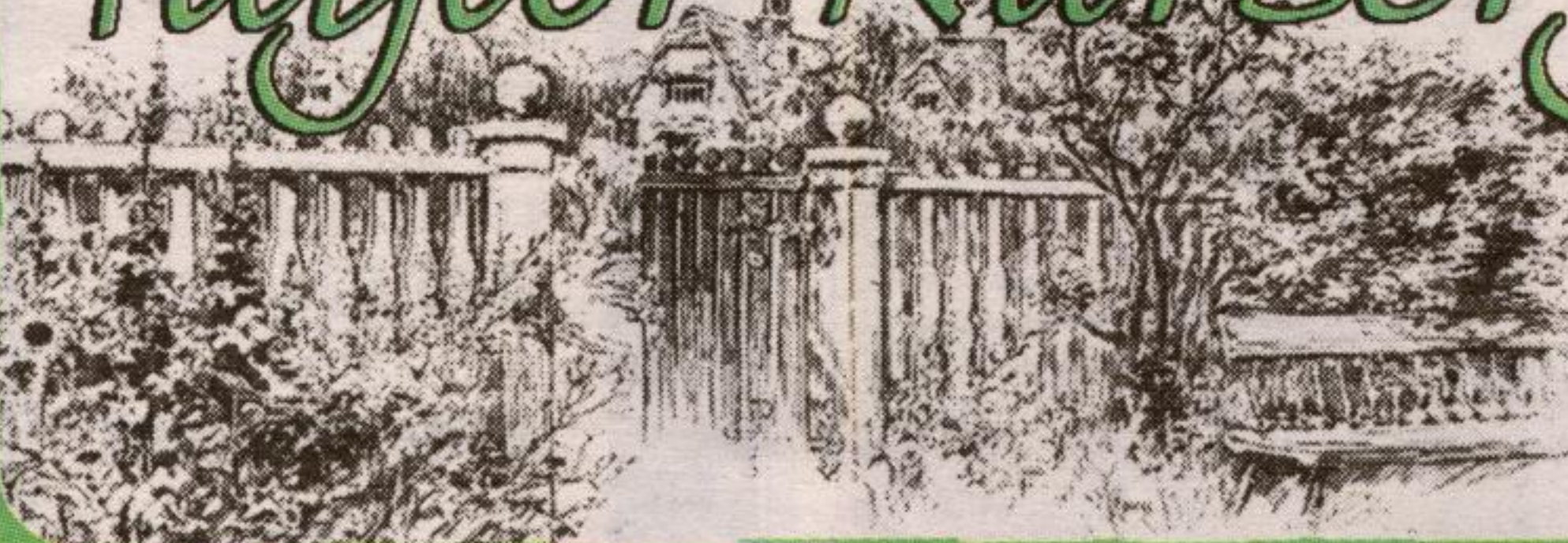
Another test I came across rated 33 different repellents based on price, efficacy and safety.

Sawyer, Green Head Fly and Muskol ranked in the top four. In Canada, both Muskol and Deep Woods OFF have products containing DEET, 30 per cent. Canadian regulations changed last summer, limiting the percentage of DEET to 30 per cent or less. Sawyer and Green Head Fly products can be ordered on-line from the U.S. at [www.sawyeronline.com](http://www.sawyeronline.com) and [www.green-head.com](http://www.green-head.com). Sawyer also has a permethrin product for application to clothing.

Research seems to indicate that concentrations greater than 50 per cent do not give longer residual protection. Temperature, rain, perspiration, swimming and other similar factors affect protection time of repellents. Reapplication may be necessary when working out doors on hot and humid days. It is recommended that skin areas treated with a repellent be washed at the end of the day. Repellents should not be used on babies, and only those with lower concentrations should be used on younger children. Spring Aedes mosquitoes will start to appear in May. Make your plans now on how you will fight the bite for the coming season.

**The public may notice activity by a group representing the National Children's Burn Society who might be canvassing in the Milton area and soliciting donations. During their door-to-door visits they may mention that they are working with the Milton Fire Department. Please take note that the Milton Fire Department is in no way involved with fundraising activities at this time.**

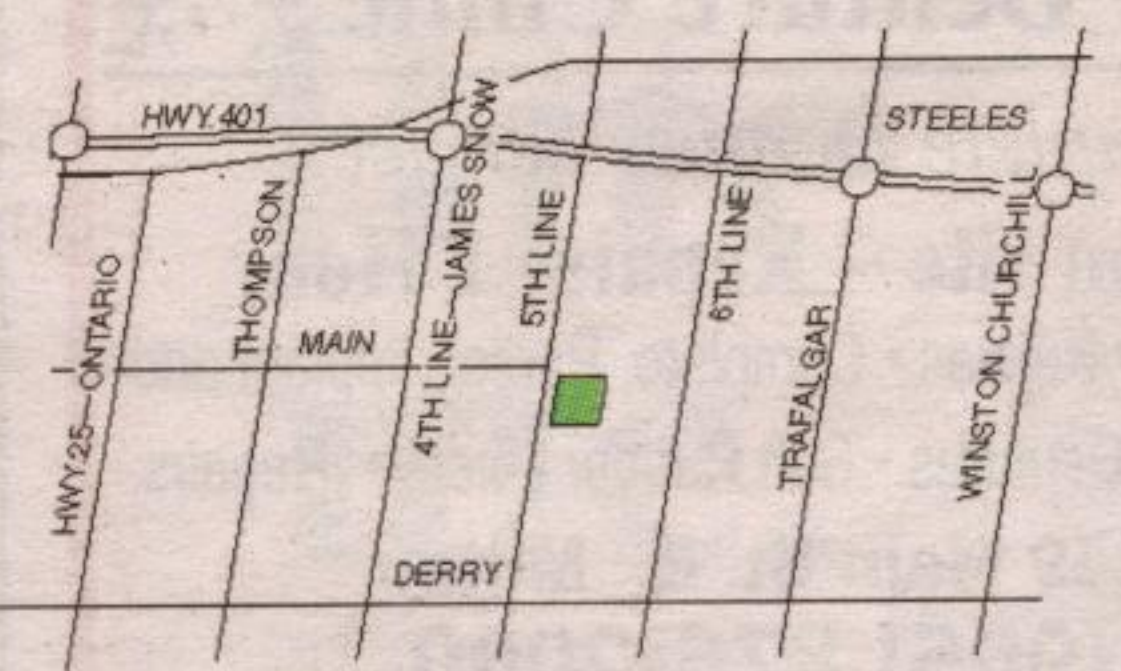
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- ... Time to plant annuals - later in May when the risk of frost is past!

Your Town and Country Gardening Centre

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