

Art in the Park
Elgin Park, Uxbridge ~ July 19, 20

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Busy time ahead in the garden

After March roared out like a lion, April brought spring!

Snowdrops, species crocus, spring heather (erica carnea) and Christmas Rose (helleborus atrorubens) are blooming in my garden and it's time to remove the winter mulches and cut down last year's perennial foliage. This must be done carefully so as not to disturb the new little plants sprouting at the base. Using a fan rake, remove winter's debris from your lawn. As soon as the soil in your vegetable garden is work-

able, plant cold-hardy radish, lettuce, spinach, peas and onion sets.

Thank you to those who responded to the perennial survey. Your comments and questions are very helpful. Congratulations to Cathy Cosentino, an avowed plant collector who has all of the "Perennials of the Year" in her garden. Sarah Reid's list of sentimental favorites was delightful - her aim to have plants named for family and friends is fun - yes there is a Hosta 'Janet' and a Phlox 'David'. Sarah's woeful complaints about



Let's Get Growing

Marjorie Mason Hogue

phlox and mildew problems prompts me to share some information regarding the phlox family.

Creeping phlox (*P. subulata*) makes colorful mats in sunny spots in May but downy mildew can be a problem. To achieve the same result without mildew worries grow Phlox douglasii or Phlox borealis. For May bloom in shady areas grow Phlox stolonifera or Phlox divaricata, the native woodland phlox. For semi-shaded areas with good soil try *P. procumbens* 'Variegata' with cream and green foliage and mauve-pink blooms and *P. 'Chattahoochie'* which has ice-blue flowers with a magenta eye.

The taller growing Phlox paniculata or summer phlox blooms in July-August but its foliage is often spoiled with powdery mildew. To help prevent this ensure adequate air circulation. Divide your clumps in early spring and give them lots of space or simply remove every third stem from an established clump. As soon as the leaves have opened begin a bi-weekly fungicide program - use one teaspoon baking soda in one litre of water with one drop of liquid soap. Ensure that phlox get sufficient moisture during dry spells.

There are some varieties of *P. paniculata* that are mildew resistant. Try Phlox 'David', a creamy fragrant white and 'Laura' which is purple with a white eye.

Similar to *P. paniculata* but with greater mildew resistance are all varieties of Phlox arendsii, carolina and maculata.

There are so many new varieties of mildew-free phlox that you may wish to get rid of your old ones entirely.

The re-birth of a perennial garden in spring is surely one of life's greatest pleasures.

I feel exactly as Celia Thaxter who wrote, "When in these fresh mornings I go into my garden before anyone is awake, I go for the time being into perfect happiness."

Send your questions and comments to:

Let's Get Growing,
c/o The Tribune
88 Brock St. West
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Attn: Marjorie Mason Hogue

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