

March is the month of promise. We get the promise of spring with our early thaws and the beginnings of life after winter. Its also the promise of mud, of our dogs dragging in the newfound winter bounties and of kids with "soakers". Luckily for us, its also the beginning of gardening season.

Many of you will have started your own seeds in containers in the kitchen, if you have not yet done so, there is lots of time as I write this. We do not begin to seed our tomatoes for retail sales until the end of March so do not panic, just get out a few flower pots, visit your local seed rack and get a bit of a head start on spring. We use a very sandy mix or artificial mix for our seedling trays and find that this works well. The baby seedlings get a good head start and with an open sandy soil the roots get enough aeration and really get established quickly. I can not stress this following point enough. The major cause of seeds dying in the pots is that most people cover them too deeply. The second cause is that the seeds are too cold. Seed packages typically say cover seeds 1/4" deep in the pot. We do not cover our seeds at all! With only a few exceptions, eg. pansy and large seeds eg melons our seeds are left uncovered in the trays. We find that they germinate better this way. If you have to cover



your seeds, do so lightly. We use vermiculite for this purpose but you could use a bit of your potting soil. Make sure you can still just see the seed as you finish your covering. Also remember, that soil temperatures are 10 degrees cooler than air temperatures, if your house is 72°F then the soil is 62°F. Seeds like a 72°F soil temperature but they will germinate at cooler temperatures, it just takes longer. Put them in a warm window or on top of the refrigerator to warm up the soil. March is also the time to do some gardening. Apple and other fruit trees can be pruned now. If in doubt about how to prune fruit trees, visit your local library or garden centre for advice and handouts. There are several systems depending on the tree variety but one should be picked out and followed to ensure good tree development and future fruiting. Before the sap begins to flow is a good time to get the pruning done. You can also apply a dormant oil spray at this time. Dormant oil is

a great way to environmentally control many insects on fruit trees without a lot of crazy sprays. Again dormant oil sprays are available at most garden centres. Following directions in March can eliminate a lot of July problems. Get the bird houses cleaned out now, erect new ones so that birds are attracted to your gardens. The odd vegetable that they get is well worth the insects that they eat (unless its the cherry trees and then you have to have netting). We planted quite a few apple trees last year and will be planting a few more this year. All different, we will be adding a Gravenstein, Tolman, and Golden Russett to our collection, which should give us about 8 varieties and fill up our existing space. After this, I suppose I will have to practice the pruning my grandfather did and just graft new apples to the old ones to keep the same number of trees but increase the varieties. His orchard was like that, he knew his varieties and all his trees produced a multitude of different apples. The only thing I really remember is that my brother and I would sneak out there and have as many as we could before we got called back into the house. Like many things, the orchard is now only a memory as it has been paved over for a subdivision. I think Grandpa's Boys would be pleased to know that there is another orchard in the family.



FEDERATED WOMEN'S INSTITUTES OF ONTARIO
Search for Peace Not War
 The conflict in the Persian Gulf has been on the minds of all Canadians, including the 20,000 members of The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, the largest rural women's organization in the province. On their behalf, on January 14th, while Parliament was debating the topic, the President of FWIO, Peggy Knapp sent the following letter to the Prime Minister of Canada, to Joe Clark and to the Minister of National Defence: "Twenty thousand members of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario have been following events in the Persian Gulf throughout this serious crisis and commend our government for pursuing diplomatic channels in search of solutions. May we urge you to continue to search out all possibilities for peace, and with the other members of the United Nations coalition, extend the sanctions against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, so the terrors of full-fledge war may not set loose the force of arms again in our world." As an organization founded in 1897 FWIO has experienced the effects of war on its own communities. During the first World War the WI members not only increased their work on the farm but they also found the time and money to support the needs of others. They raised over \$4,000,000 which was used to finance a hospital ship, field kitchens as well as overseas relief. Not content with money they knitted socks, sweaters and mitts as well as sewn articles. During the second World War the Women's Institute members made over one and half million knitted articles for the forces as well as hundreds of quilts. Other activities included a furnished recreation room at Camp Borden, tons of jam made by the WI members and sent overseas as well as raising over \$1,000,000. After the Korean War the WI members helped purchase hand looms and sewing machines for the refugees. FWIO cares for its members and their concerns, as well as their local communities and the world wide community, through its membership in the Associated Country Women of the World. For more information contact Peggy Knapp, FWIO President 416-822-0416 Geraldine Campbell, FWIO Public Relations Officer 519-674-0542

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