

## SIMPLY GARDENING by DOUG GREEN

May is a wonderful month. It is the month of our first shirt sleeve days, our first fragrant flowers and our first cut flowers; our gardens are full of the promise of the never ending summer to come. I like May. I especially like to walk down to the greenhouses and see the rows of plants waiting to get out into my garden. The plants that I have never grown before are tempting me with their promise of unknown blossoms and scents while the old faithful plants are getting set to appease my desire for some sense of stability in the garden.

My Tithonia plants are ready to go and while they will not bloom for another 2 months, when they do with their 3 inch rich orange blooms carried on huge 3 foot wide plants I will love them for their size and their exuberance. The Torenia in its pot is waiting for that special spot under shrubs where its purple wishbone flowers will delight a late afternoon. Only 12 inches tall, I like this All America Winner as it flowers all summer and stays very bushy. The jungle atmosphere we are creating around our swimming pool this year intrigues me. The Castor bean plants are straining to be outside, free from the confines of the small flower pot. These 8 foot tall monsters will create a fine privacy hedge and well help to smother out some of the less desirable weeds that creep up to our small pool. (if not smother, at least hide). The Datura with their white trumpet blooms will be planted next to the wall of Castor bean and the "jungle" look will be complete. I may have a life time supply of Datura seed when they bloom but I do look forward to the privacy of being surrounded by my own jungle.

I am also looking forward to some of the newer Celosias. We trialled the Pink Castle variety last summer and I am looking forward to the 18" tall blooms again this year. I think I will plant more and use them for cut flowers. Even though the Schizanthus die out after blooming, I intend to plant a few of them close to our door garden. When they are in bloom I really enjoy the bounty that they put out. Our dooryard garden will also take care of the herbs we like to use in the summer time. Fresh parsley is so easy to grow that it is a crime to buy it during the summer. (we grow ours all winter too on a sunny windowsill) and there is nothing like a fresh sprig or two in potato salads. We'll also grow the flat variety this summer as it seems to add a nice touch to cold soups.

One plant I intend to have everywhere is the Citrosa. This is a genetically engineered plant, a combination of Geranium and Grass of China. Producing the oil Citronella, it is reputed to keep blackflies and mosquitoes at bay. I can hardly wait. If this works, there will be no more nights spent waiting for that single buzzing mosquito to land. (to heck with the single one, what about the hordes that invade our old stone house every spring). These plants are treated like geraniums and one plant should keep the buglies from one room. Outside they have to be placed every 5 feet to be effective. We have them in the greenhouses and I can attest to the fact that they certainly have a pleasant yet distinctive lemon odour. I will let you know how they work out in my bedroom this spring. I may even experiment with crushing a few leaves and spreading the juice on my hands and neck to see how it works as a repellent, at the very least I will end up smelling like a large lemon. (I know, I know- I deserve any comments on this line that I get).

I have heard some people talking about their gardens and how they have trouble growing Rhododendrons in this area. I just wanted to let you know that our 6 varieties look OK going into the spring (I have to write this column before they actually start growing again) and I am looking forward to planting a few more varieties this spring. One that I am especially looking forward to is the Northern Light series, these plant buds are reputed to be hardy to -40F. Look for them at your garden centre because they are new and could be the answer to your problems if your garden is cold. We have found that if you make the soil right for this class of plant, then they will grow. The soil is the key, good acidity, no clay and excellent drainage. They need noon day shade the entire year in order to stop them losing too much water in both the summer and winter. If you get the soil to the right acid level then anybody in this neck of the woods can grow Rhodo's!!

Let me leave you with this thought from Rudyard Kipling, it sums up May and perhaps adds something to the rest of the summer.

"And when your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,

You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden"

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