

GARDENING LETTERS

by Doug Green

Well the frost has finally hit and the gardens are finished for another year. It was a very good season and with only a few exceptions we are pleased, I hope you had a good season too. I know that some of you have taken plants inside for the winter and I know that I will be getting a few calls about garden pests that have moved inside as well. I have found that insecticidal soap works well on most pests except for the scales and mealybugs. On these two pests, let me suggest a q-tip dipped in alcohol and then touched to the pests. For the plant lice (aphids) soap is very effective.

Winter readiness for the perennial garden follows a very simple rule. Leave the garden in the fall as you would like to find it in the spring. Cut down the dead foliage and rake it up. Do a good weeding now so that overwintering weeds won't get a headstart in the spring. The annual flower and vegetable gardens should be cleared of all vegetation and then roughly worked up or plowed. If you get rid of vegetation, you'll not leave any overwintering homes for some of our common pests. A little work now takes care of some problems next year. I know that we take the discs to the garden, cut up all the foliage and then deep plow the whole thing so that all the stalks etc. are buried. The raised beds get a cleaning and rough digging with the fork. We had some good results with some new varieties this year and I would recommend the following new plants and suppliers.

Johnny's Selected Seeds, Foss Hill Rd., Albion, Maine 04910, USA. We grew several Johnny's varieties this year: *** The best - EZ Pick Bush Snap Bean. This bean had our kids coming back for seconds and the beans were easily seen and picked. I'm throwing out our old varieties. This is Doug's pick of the year.

Nova Tomatoes - these are a plum shaped canning tomato similar to the Roma family. They were considerably less juicy than VeeRoma so they would be great for canning. However they were not as good tasting as judged by our staff taste testing group. They also did not bear as heavily as the VeeRoma plants in our garden and were a little harder to peel in the kitchen. Autumn Gold Pumpkin.

This is the AAS winner that I wrote about last spring. It is a good pumpkin, heavy yields of good fruit and it is really interesting to see them in a bright yellow form under the leaves in early summer. Well worth growing.

Peppers. We tested several peppers for Johnny's this year but due to a water shortage in the raised beds we did not get a heavy enough yield to really taste test them. I can tell you that unofficially, I am going to test them again next year because a few of the ones I tasted were very very good. (try the Italia)

I will mention a few other suppliers in following columns but let me close off the testing section by mentioning that we really enjoyed our taste testing for the tomatoes this year. We took a lunch hour and cut up a lot of tomatoes so that only Andrea knew which varieties were which. We all tasted these slices and ranked them all from top to bottom. I have to confess my former favourite fruit 'Floramerica' did not make it this year. Our unanimous choice for best tasting tomato of the year was 'Ultra Boy'. (Andrea's favourite) Other good tomatoes were 'Fantastic', 'Floramerica' and 'Nepal'. 'Improved Wayahead' was deemed to be a plant not worth growing as the fruit was bland and it was not as early as claimed.

I will be using Johnny's for our home gardens and I would suggest that you write for a catalogue (it's free). If nothing else, try the beans. Someone asked me about roses the other day and how to winterize the climbers. I suggested that if they did not want to dig up, bend over, wrap and mulch the plant every year then to stop buying these rose clones that simply do not belong in this climate. I recommend the Explorer series of Roses. Bred by Dr. Svjeda in Ottawa, these are winter hardy in our area without special care. The climber in this series, John Franklin (red), Henry Hudson (white) and Jens Munk (pink) are bush types and in my opinion well worth growing. If you want to baby your roses, grow the fancy hybrids but if you want some reasonable, disease resistant, heavy blooming plants get some of the Explorer series. One final note, in researching our stone home, we have

discovered that it was built in 1848 by Edward Green and that the magnificent rose bush which was dying when we purchased the property (heavily shaded by a Maple) is a Harrison's Yellow Multiflora Rose. We have located one of these and will be reestablishing this plant in our newly redesigned gardens.

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