

Colonial Farm Nursery

Spring 2011

The Humble Petunia

Petunias are native to South America where they grow as reseeding, short-lived perennials. In our area, petunias are annuals since they are frost sensitive. They are in the same family as tobacco, potatoes, tomatoes and nightshade. In fact, the name 'petunia' is from the French word *petun* meaning 'tobacco'. The tubular-shaped flowers are pollinated by insects and popular with butterflies and hummingbirds. Discovered in the early 1800's by James Tweedie, a South American explorer, the petunia was sent to Paris where its popularity rose quickly.

Almost all petunias now sold are hybrids which botanists and breeders have been tweaking for various colors, shapes, forms and sizes. There are basically 4 different categories of petunia:



1) Grandiflora, which has the largest flowers of up to 4 inches, includes plants in the Ultra and Supercascade Series.

2) Multiflora petunias are half the size at about 2 inches but they spread quickly and are very sun tolerant. Cultivars in this category include the Carpet and Madness Series.

3) Hedgiflora are the spreading groundcover petunias that have become so popular due to their fast growth, low height and easy care (no need to dead-head). The Waves and Surfinas are part of this category.

4) Milliflora are the tiny petunias that are great fillers in baskets or mixed containers. The blooms are only about 1 inch, but numerous, such as in the Fantasy Series. (Calibrachoa, commonly called million bells, despite looking like one, is not actually a petunia although some botanists place it in the same genus.)

Petunias like full sun and well-drained soil. They are drought tolerant, but if you have them in baskets or containers check the water daily. Deadhead (pinch off spent blooms) regularly to keep the plants looking tidy and encourage repeat blooming. Throughout the summer, cut back some stems occasionally to encourage new, bushy growth and prevent leggy growth habit. For example, cut 1/3 of the stems one week, wait a week or two, cut the next third and so on.

Petunias like full sun and well-drained soil. They are drought tolerant, but if you have them in baskets or containers check the water daily. Deadhead (pinch off spent blooms) regularly to keep the plants looking tidy and encourage repeat blooming. Throughout the summer, cut back some stems occasionally to encourage new, bushy growth and prevent leggy growth habit. For example, cut 1/3 of the stems one week, wait a week or two, cut the next third and so on.

Upcoming Events — Spring Workshops

Vegetable/Herb Gardening - Saturday, March 12 @ 10:00am/11:30am (2-part workshop w/ break between sessions) — Get the scoop on when and how to plant your veggies plus tips on Square Foot and container gardening. At the Herb Gardening Workshop learn how to grow herbs and discover the culinary delights of using fresh herbs. Free tasting menu using fresh herbs. Please RSVP to 304-263-5232 by Tuesday, March 8 for the herb workshop so we have enough food for everyone. Coupons and give-aways for attendees.

Hypertufa - Saturday, March 26 @ 10:00am — A hands-on workshop for learning how make hypertufa planters. Cost of the workshop is \$12 which includes all the materials needed to make a 12" square or oval container. If you have a specially-shaped container you'd like to use, please make sure it is under 12" in diameter. Wear old clothes. Please RSVP to 304-263-5232 by Monday, March 21 so the instructor has time to assemble the appropriate amount of materials.

Annuals / Containers - Saturday, April 23 @ 10:00am/11:30am (2-part workshop w/ break between sessions) — See and learn about the plants we have in our greenhouses, and then learn how to put it all together for spectacular planters and baskets. 20% discount on containers/annuals purchased during the workshop.





Easter and Mother's Day

Easter: Easter flowers brighten up the seemingly endless winter as well as being sweetly fragrant. Each spring we get in a large shipment of Easter lilies, regular and mini daffodils, tulips, Easter mums, hydrangeas, hyacinths and azaleas. And, of course, we also have a great selection of pansies, the go-to flower for cold weather color. Sales of Easter flowers begins approximately April 15, pansies from mid-March. Easter flowers, which are grown in a greenhouse, should be kept indoors because sudden exposure to cold outdoor temperatures can shock the plant, causing damage or death. Pansies, grown at our nursery and hardened off for cold weather, can be planted out in March or April.



This year, instead of just getting an Easter flower, why not get a grown-up Easter basket for yourself or someone you love! We can custom design a basket with flowers, gardening supplies and gift certificates. Or perhaps you'd prefer a mixed planter of lovely Easter flowers and pansies.

Mother's Day: Perhaps prompted by the Greek festivities held to honor Rhea, mother of the Gods, or the early Christian Mother's Festival to honor Mary and, later, all mothers, our

current Mother's Day was created by Grafton, West Virginia native Anna Jarvis in 1908. Mother's Day was not a widespread holiday until it was supported by a wealthy Philadelphia merchant named John Wanamaker. President Woodrow Wilson made it an official holiday in 1914. Held on

the second Sunday in May, this year on the 8th, Mother's Day remains the day that we get to thank our moms, grandmas, aunts and other important female figures in our lives. Flowers are the gift of choice, and what better place to get flowers than a nursery? Present your loved one with a gift of flowers that won't be gone in a week like a cut

bouquet – consider instead one of these: a tree or shrub that will provide years of enjoyment, a colorful perennial that will delight year after year, a custom-designed planter for a summer of beauty, or a custom-designed basket with flowers, gardening supplies, gift certificates, and lots more goodies that you can select from.



Designer Planters

In mid to late April come in and have us custom design your planters for spring. We will put it together and call you in a couple days to come pick it up.

Containers are generally planted with 3 elements in mind: something tall, a filler, and a trailer over the side. This is by no means a-set-in-stone rule. As with all decor, what appeals to you is what is right. Monochromatic color schemes are

very modern and currently quite popular; they are usually minimalist in the quantity and type of plant, sometimes completely eschewing flowers for foliage. An old-fashioned look is bursting with multiple colors and lots of different flowers.

Caring for your container really is easy – the most important thing is frequent watering! Because there are so many plants in such a small space, often sitting in the sun and summer wind, planters and baskets tend to dry out very quickly. You should check the soil every day. We put slow-release fertilizer in your containers which usually lasts all summer. Some flowers, like petunias, may need extra. If leaves start to appear chlorotic (yellow) and you have been watering regularly, your plants may need an extra dose of fertilizer. Deadheading and cutting back of leggy growth towards the end of the summer can be beneficial, as noted in the section on petunias.

Pick a Peck of Peppers

Sweet, mild, hot, hotter – these extraordinary fruits were first cultivated in Central and South America where Columbus discovered them and brought them back to Europe. Today, there are peppers to suit every taste. Grow them in full sun and warm soil after all danger of frost has passed from transplants that have been started indoors. Avoid planting them too early: the soil temperature has to have reached at least 50°F for them to grow and even a mild frost will damage or kill them. Apply any vegetable fertilizer like 10-10-10 a couple weeks after planting and periodically throughout the summer, following package directions. Be sure to water regularly as too little water while the fruit is setting can result in fruit drop, blossom end rot or under-sized fruit.

Bell peppers are large, blocky fruits that have a mild, sweet taste. All bell peppers start out green; it is only when you let them stay on the vine that they change color to red, orange, yellow or purple, depending on the variety. The colored peppers are much more mature, therefore sweeter, but take longer to grow which explains the higher price in the grocery store. They are great eaten fresh in salads, tossed in stir fries or stuffed and baked.

One of the most delicious preparations is for roasted red peppers: very lightly rub a little olive or vegetable oil on the pepper. Place it on a grill or under the oven broiler until the skin scorches and blackens, turning when necessary. Put the blackened peppers in a large ziplock bag or in a bowl tightly covered with plastic wrap. The heat from the peppers will



steam the skin, making them easy to peel once cool enough to handle. Remove the skin, seeds and ribs.

Hot peppers are rated on the 0-16 million Scoville heat scale, from the relatively mild Jalapeno (about 3,500) to hot Habanero (around 200,000) to the Thai chile Naga Viper's blistering 1,359,000. Pure capsaicin, the oil responsible for the heat, is Scoville's 16 million rating. If you eat a hot pepper and need to "cool down" your mouth, use milk to neutralize the pepper oil – water only spreads the oils. And always wear surgical gloves when working with hot

peppers to avoid skin irritation or later rubbing the oils in your eyes.

Visit our website for a more detailed description of the bell, sweet and hot peppers we have available this spring.

Cilantro

Cilantro is a wonderful herb used in Mexican, Indian and Thai cuisine. When the green stems and leaves are used, it is referred to as 'cilantro'; when the seeds are used it is 'coriander'. Records from 5,000 years ago in Greek and Roman cultures mention coriander. In fact, the name is from the Greek *koris*, meaning bedbug because it is said the seeds both look and smell like bedbugs. Well, millions of people must then love the smell of bedbugs, because this is a wonderfully aromatic and tasty herb! Don't be tempted to use dried cilantro because it loses its taste rapidly. Coriander is fine to use as a dried seed. Grow jalapenos and cilantro and make these easy, great tasting poppers:

Ingredients:

- 8oz cream cheese, softened
- 8 oz shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/4 c mayonnaise
- 24 fresh jalapeno peppers, halved lengthwise and seeded
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 tablespoon milk
- 1 1/2 cups crushed cracker crumbs
- 3 tbs chopped cilantro

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 375°.
- Mix together cheeses and stuff into pepper halves.
- Mix eggs and milk in one bowl, put cracker crumbs in a separate bowl. Roll peppers in the egg mixture then in the crumbs.
- Bake for 15 minutes for a spicy popper, 30-45 minutes for a milder popper. (The longer they bake, the more spiciness they lose.)
- Garnish with chopped cilantro



What's In A Name?

Botanical taxonomy, the grouping of plants in some kind of logical order, has been around since the days of Aristotle. The most significant advances were made in Carl Linnaeus's plant book in 1753 and were based on overall similarity (phenetics). After the introduction of the theory of evolution it got another overhaul in an attempt to group plants by phylogenetic relationships (molecular similarities based on DNA). Today, modern technologies continue to refine classifications based on DNA relationships – so occasionally a plant will be given a new classification based on new information. Generally, you will see a two or three-part botanical name using the genus, the species, and the cultivar or variety.

Lots of plants have multiple common names, popular by region, nationality or even generation. So, more than just a long, Latin, fancy name, the botanical name helps to identify an exact plant. Take for instance the common name geranium. *Geranium* is actually the genus name for 422 species of flowering biennial and perennial plants, none of which are the greenhouse plant we typically refer to as a geranium – these are, in fact, *Pelargoniums* and are not frost hardy. The true *Geranium* is commonly called a crane's bill. Confused yet? Let's make it more simple. Everyone knows what a phlox is – the common name is the same as the botanical genus name. But wait! There are 67 species of phlox, plus all the varieties within each species! Consider just 4 common species: tall garden phlox that bloom in the summer, *Phlox paniculata*, like 'David' and 'Nora Leigh'; spring blooming creeping phlox, *Phlox subulata*, with varieties including 'Emerald' or 'Candy Stripes'; woodland phlox, *Phlox divaricata*, like 'Chattahoochee'; and an annual species, *Phlox drummondii*, like '21st Century Magenta Mix'.

So you can see how knowing the botanical name can come in handy when you're looking for a specific tree, shrub or perennial. When you come into the nursery looking for a cypress, you might actually want a *Cypress* like the tall growing 'Blue Ice'. But maybe you really want a *Chamaecyparis* like *C. pisifera* 'Filifera Aurea' (a Gold Mop cypress) or perhaps a *Cupressocyparis leylandii* (a Leyland cypress). All commonly called cypress, but only one is actually, botanically, a *Cypress*.

Whew! What's in a name? A lot or a little, very specific or perhaps a shade ambiguous. Together we'll figure it out! Stayed tuned for the next newsletter when we'll let you know about the recent reclassification and renaming of some popular plants.

Martinsburg WV 25403
9008 Tuscarora Pike
NURSERY AND LANDSCAPING INC.
Colonial Farm

Helleborus - The Lenten Rose

Long before winter is over, the Lenten Rose, native to Europe and Asia, is blooming. Plant them in part sun to full shade in soil with lots of organic matter that is moist but well-drained. They do not like to be disturbed after being planted, but once established, they will cheerfully grow for decades. Helleborus have large, leathery, evergreen leaves that need only a brief spring tidying and nodding blooms that last up to a month. The popular hybridized blooms come in a variety of shades: white, green, mauve, and black to name a few. Some are speckled or have banded edges. Helleborus are toxic if ingested and many people find them a skin irritant, but the beautiful winter blooms definitely make it a valuable garden addition.

