



Farmer Joe's Dirt

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3
FALL-HOLIDAY 2009

SMITH'S ACRES LLC

Before You Know It

by Robin Perkins

Before you know it... summer has come and gone and I find myself inside the big pumpkin bins trying to lift every last pumpkin out of it to display. Luckily for me and my failing back, my 9 year old great nephew, McKenzie, loves to come after school and help unload **tons of pumpkins and gourds**. He loves it! Not to say I don't love it, but let's face it, he's a lot younger and more flexible than I am. T.J., Tracey, and Kara, who have really been my muscle this

summer (thanks guys) are sure to get their workouts this fall lifting pumpkins too. Tracey has three children who like to tag along to work with her. I can see her now saying, "Kids get in the car, you are coming to work with me. We have something really fun to do today...unload pumpkins!" So don't be surprised if you see any little helpers lugging pumpkins this fall season.

Before you know it... Autumn is here and so are the mums, asters, Montauk daisies, millet, ornamental cabbage and kale. It's time to refresh those summer planters. Pull out the limp impatiens, the leggy geraniums. Try sticking in some Million Bells or fall pansies. Both are great plants that will take cool fall weather and keep looking great. We also have some great fall planters already planted for those of you who want **instant gratification**. If nothing else, checking out our planters will

give you inspiration for your tired planters back home. We have bales of hay and corn stalks, ornamental corn and gourds – everything you need for fall decorating.

Before you know it... apples and pears replace summer fruits. Warm apple cider sipped while sitting around a nice bonfire, hmm.... sounds good to me. I'm notoriously noted to be "Solar Powered" so any way I can stay warm during the fall is great! How about some warm apple pie? Mary Foster from Old Orchard Farm in East Lyme has been baking pies & muffins all summer long. They are *very* tasty. Lots of you have had standing orders each week (customer Ed couldn't survive the week without those infamous blueberry muffins). We all know how hectic it is to prepare Thanksgiving dinner and entertain our guests, so why not order one of Mary's Thanksgiving Day pies? I personally love her pumpkin pie the best! Be sure to order early because there are only so many pies that Mary can make!

Before you know it... Santa Joe (he really could pass for Santa with the white hair & beard) and the Veggie Elves are busy preparing for Christmas. The Veggie Elves have been busy decorating Artificial Trees. I know it's a little early, but it takes us *sooooo long* to get them just right. (Speaking of which, where's Donna? Is she buried under a sea of goodies that need to be unpacked and priced?!) We're sure to give you lots of great ideas for decorating your home. We definitely have some unusual themed trees this year – traditional as well as more eclectic. Be sure to check them all out.

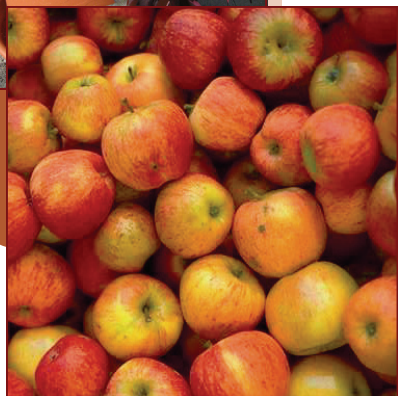
Don't forget that Christmas ornaments make great gifts for those hard to buy for folks on your list. **Before you know it... the Veggie Elves will be busy** making our specialty wreaths, Boxwood arrangements, fruit and goodie gift baskets, fruit baskets and lots of "real" seasonal items for gift giving and decorating your home. Place your orders early so the Veggie Elves have plenty of time to create the perfect holiday gifts for you. (Blue or sparkly poinsettias anyone?!?) **Before you know it... it's New Years Eve Day** and Smith's Acres is closed up tight until **March. And before you know it... the Veggie Gang will be hard at work up at the farm.** During the long winter months, while you're all snuggled warm in your houses, we'll be at the farm, transplanting like crazy. Spring doesn't happen without some of our Smith's Acres magic happening behind the scenes.

**Thank you
for another
wonderful season.
Happy Holidays!**

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Not Just a Summer Thing: Hydrangeas by Tim Sullivan



This summer has been a strange one for hydrangeas. People have been reporting that they have been gorgeous or that their plants were big and green with no blooms. The 'Nikko Blue's seem to have been especially temperamental. Don't panic! While blooms may have been sparse, the plants have been very healthy. Here are a few reminders about hydrangea care for the rest of the season. You do **not** want to prune hydrangeas in the fall.

Go ahead and clip blooms that have gone by, but do not prune the shrub back. This would encourage late new growth that will get damaged by winter temperatures. In fall, apply a light amount of an acid-based fertilizer such as Hollytone. This will give the shrub nutrients it needs for the winter.

Hydrangeas can be (but don't have to be) pruned in early spring. Wait until the leaf buds start to swell. Trim out the old wood that does not have any leaf growth, and on the stems that have growth, clip them

back to the top set of leaves. Spring is also the time to apply Hollytone in the recommended amounts.

The Pruner's Bible is an excellent resource. If you have any questions about when or how to prune hydrangeas or any shrub, stop in and ask to have a peek at it.

P.S. Because the entire Veggie Gang is delirious about Hydrangeas, we always have nice ones on hand, and fall is a great time to plant them, plus many varieties are showing off some stunning fall foliage!

Mother-of-the-Brides Unite!

By Teri Smith

I'm happy to say that I will have a strong shoulder to lean on during all of this wedding planning craziness during the next year. Donna's youngest daughter, Jenny, is also engaged to be married next year. Jenny and Noah picked a fabulous date (August 14th - the same date that Farmer Joe and I were married many, many years ago). Donna and I are planning the bridal showers to both be held in her beautiful backyard next summer. Since both girls are having late summer weddings, and both have chosen blue to be their "color", **we need to plant more late blooming blue flowers in her gardens. On the list are lots of Russian sages, Meadow sages, Aconitums, Asters, Kallameris, catmint and 'Endless Summer' and 'Nikko Blue' hydrangeas.** I figure that my "rental fee" will be lots of plants and maybe some big blue containers filled to overflowing with annuals to add to her large collection of flower-filled pots around the pool. We'll be trying to share not only ideas for the showers, but party essentials (glassware and tablecloths) whenever possible, our way to "reduce, reuse, recycle". We'll have a blast planning these special days with our fabulous daughters. So if you come to the shop next summer, and either of us seem a little more scatter-brained and "Mother-of-the-Bride-zilla-ish" than normal, please bear with us. We should both be back to normal, this time next year.

Happy Customer Club

I haven't talked about this program in a little while, so here's a quick refresher on how you can earn an extra \$10 to spend at Smith's. And give \$10 to a friend. We know that the best advertising is by word of mouth. So we want to reward you when you bring a new shopper/gardener into our shop. Every time you bring us a new customer, we will ask the two of you to fill out an address form. We will check against our mailing list, and if they are a new shopper to Smith's, we'll send you (our Happy Customer) and your friend (our New Customer) each a \$10.00 gift certificate in the mail. You can bring in as many new customers as you like - we'll be happy to meet them all! So please spread the word for us.

Thanks! -Teri

Ladies Night Out

It's time again for all of us ladies to escape for an evening out. No kids or husbands allowed - just us girls. We certainly deserve it! So mark your calendars for Friday October 23rd for our annual "Ladies Night Out in the Greenhouse". We have come up with some great new and some old favorite vendors that you'll enjoy meeting. It will be a perfect evening to relax with your friends, and start thinking about Holiday shopping - for ourselves as well as loved ones on our lists. We'll have a "Wish List" for you to fill out for those guys in your life who seem to be shopping challenged. Tickets will be only \$10 and you will be given lots of coupons worth considerably more than that when you arrive. Plan on joining us for a fun evening - food, wine, probably a little chocolate, shopping - including lots of jewelry - what more could a woman want?? (Don't forget - no kids!) Call to get registered!

Care & Share Wine & Beer Tasting

On Friday, November 20th, we will be teaming up with Sue from Mermaid Liquors again to raise funds for Care & Share, our local food pantry. Last year at our Silent Auction, we raised over \$6,000 - we'd sure like to top that this year. I'm sure we can with your help. We are looking for all sorts of items and services to be donated for the silent auction. Last year there were hair styling, day long sails, furniture, car tune-ups, dinners out, movie tickets, and all sorts of gift baskets. The list was amazing! Please give us a call with your donations. Tickets will be only \$25 each. Once again, food will be supplied by local restaurants and Sue will line up all her wine and beer merchants for the samplings. Where else can you have a fun night out for only \$25 and help a local charity at the same time?

Donna's Favorite Fall Recipe

WHIPPED SWEET POTATOES WITH CARAMELIZED APPLES

4 large sweet potatoes
3 tablespoons butter, room temp.
2 tablespoons heavy cream
1/2 cup applesauce
2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
salt and pepper
2 apples, peeled and cored
3 tablespoons sugar brown or white

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
Pierce sweet potatoes with a fork several times.
Bake until done (about 50 min.)
Remove and cool slightly.
Scoop out the flesh and discard skins.
Place potatoes with 2 tbs. of butter and the cream in a bowl and using an electric mixer, beat until smooth.
Add applesauce and ginger, beat to combine.
Season with salt and pepper.
Transfer to an oven proof serving dish, place in oven and heat 10 minutes.
Meanwhile, cut apples into 1 inch pieces. Melt remaining butter in a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat.
Add apples and sugar; sauté until golden and nicely caramelized, about 8 minutes. Remove from heat.
Remove serving dish from oven, and top with apples. Serve immediately.

Fun in Fall by Kara McBride

Wow, this summer sure was short, and with fall here, there's a long list of fun things I want to do!

When we went to see P. Allen Smith speak at Pleasant View Gardens this summer, I got a lot of great ideas to try out.

-Flower arrangements in pumpkins, gourds, and what's new: apples and pears- I can't wait to try it!

-Pumpkins hanging like hanging baskets with candles- guess we better wait til closer to Halloween to give this a try!

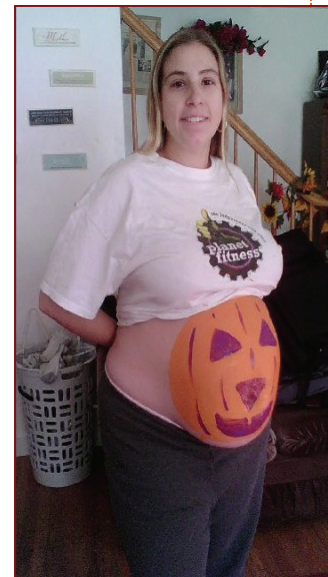
-Have a mini-pumpkin and gourd hunt for the kids. Houston will love this, and what a fun way to spend time outside on a crisp fall day!

-Belly painting! This was me last year right before I gave birth to Mia. It was a fun way to keep that end-of-pregnancy stress in check.

-Apple picking, and of course, eating. So many fresh, crispy, juicy, sweet and tart apples to try.

So many fun things to do in fall, better get going before the snow flies!

Happy Fall!!!!



Gardening is a Grand Experiment by Tim Sullivan

This growing season has certainly proved it to be a grand experiment for those of us who planted vegetable gardens. Too much water and not enough sun early in the season caused our basil to rot and the tomatoes to grow nice and green, but where were the fruit? Were the cucumbers going to get established before the weeds did? The second half of the summer brought us hot and sunny with no water which presented its own challenges.

I had so much fun working with people planning and planting their first vegetable garden only to watch them come back in with drowned basil and cucumber plants. It is always hard to maintain the energy you get from planting up your garden in spring through the whole season, but this year got every vegetable gardener down in the dumps whether you are a veteran or someone trying a patio tomato for the first time.

Then came the Blight! I thought it was ironic that the disease that put my dad's family on a ship bound for the United States in 1847 would cause so much worry for gardeners this summer.

Fortunately most of us were not affected. The blight mainly came into people's gardens from a plants bought at a big-box stores. This brings up an interesting issue. This year, many people planted gardens so they could "eat locally". Local produce almost always tastes better than produce trucked one thousand miles to get to the store. The blight was so wide-spread because the infected plants came from a large commercial farm and were distributed at tons of big box stores all along the Eastern Seaboard. If you want to eat local produce, shouldn't your plants be locally grown too? Most of the vegetable, annual and herb plants we sell at Smith's Acres are raised at our East Lyme farm, while shrubs and perennials are grown primarily at Connecticut based nurseries.

Now that the season is coming to a close, our gardens can go fallow while our minds grow with ideas on next year. Gardening does not have to be a one shot deal. This year was discouraging, but it was an investment for the next year! The soil has been worked and amended, and will be in better shape next spring.

Here is a list of things to do this fall to put the plot to bed and prep it for next year.

1. Clear out all plants and weeds one last time
2. Take any compost or manure you have and spread it out, then turn the garden over one last time
3. Sow the garden with winter rye, or lay a covering of Mainely Mulch. This will help hold the soil in place and discourage weeds. The grass will add nitrogen to the soil in the spring when you till it into the ground.
4. Sign up for seed catalogs. Nothing fires up a gardener's imagination for the coming spring like looking through those books in the dead of winter.

The Veggie Gang have almost convinced Teri to let us put in a garden out back next year. We think it will be a fun place to experiment and provide a place for some down and dirty hands-on workshops.

PS. Receive 25 % off your purchase of soil amendments and Mainely Mulch w/article.

Take a sneak peak at Holiday-By-The-Veggie-Elves!
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Four-Season Gardening

by Jen McMahon

I'll be the first to admit that my enthusiasm for being cold in the winter isn't what it once was, so I don't always give a lot of thought to having plants that are interesting in winter in my garden. That being said, there are plenty of winters around here that are very un-winter-like, so having some pretty plants can sure shake off some of that moody lack-of-light and trapped in the house with annoying kids type depression. Although, at heart, I am a perennial nut, finding perennials that look great from fall through winter is tricky. My best bets are the ornamental grasses, anything in the Miscanthus or Pennisetum families look great (unless they get messed up by heavy ice). My 'Provence' lavenders look great all winter too.

Shrubby things really give the forlorn winter look some help—make sure to plant some of the shrubby dogwoods that have either red or yellow stems. They look really great against snow. I love the Witch Hazels and Fothergillas for their

craggy habits and their surprisingly early bloom times. Andromeda is a beautiful evergreen with four seasons of great looks: spring flowers, red-tipped summer foliage, and flower buds that look pretty through fall and winter. Harry Lauder's Walking Stick and the contorted Locust which I told myself I was buying for Tim last Father's Day are really cool plants especially in winter. And let's not forget things with pretty berries that look great to us, and help our feathered friends survive the cold: Callicarpa (purple berries!), Winterberry, Beach Roses, and English Holly, just to name a few. There's those perennials too that have cool seed heads, like the Echinaceas, Rudbeckias, Agastaches and Sedums—so don't be too scrupulous in cleaning up this fall—if it looks even mildly interesting, why not leave it for spring cleaning? And try some spray paint and glitter on those faded flowers just to get your neighbors guessing about you!



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