**What’s New Presentation March 26, 2014**

Sofie’s Picks - A listing of plants presented at the Brooklin Horticultural Society meeting March 26, 2014, a combination of new and/or newer introductions and/or other interesting plants and tips and ideas. I live on a 10 acre property located in zone 5b in Whitby, Ontario, Canada (located about ½ hour drive east of Toronto) and I love to garden and have extensive gardens on the property.

**SOME GARDEN PLACES I SHOP AT IN THE DURHAM REGION:**

***Please support our local nurseries so we don’t end up shopping at box stores! See the note about Hotner Garden Centre listed at the end of this list of nurseries.***

Here is a list of places I frequent. If you know of anyone in this area that you would like to add, please let me know. For anyone reading this blog out of area, these are located in Ontario, Canada, zone 5, 5b or thereabouts, most of them in the Durham region where I live.

***Below are websites of garden centres that list all the plants they sell at their nursery or by mail order.* Most allow you to pick up your order if you do not want to pay for shipping. I refer to these websites to see if they carry the plants in my presentations and include them in my “Where to Buy” column. I prefer to shop locally in the Durham region. You may find the plants I feature at many other nurseries as well.**

[**www.gardenimport.com**](http://www.gardenimport.com) Mail Order Company, Thornhill, Ont. 1-800-339-8314 Pick-up allowed – Bayview Highway 7 area.

[**www.goldenbrookhostas.com**](http://www.goldenbrookhostas.com) Blackstock, Ontario (located just east of Port Perry) Mail order (Canada only) + pick up. Great website listing a huge selection of hostas with photos, prices and latest varieties. Tour their garden to see many varieties for sale.

[**http://www.lamrockscountrygarden.com**](http://www.lamrockscountrygarden.com) – hostas, roses, some perennials. Varieties & prices listed on website – they have not updated their website since 2012 so don’t know what is happening there – located in Port Perry

[**www.masonhousegardens.com**](http://www.masonhousegardens.com) 3520 Durham Road #1(Brock Rd), RR 4 PO Box 886 Uxbridge, ON L9P 1R4, south of Goodwood Rd.  
905-649-3532 – New introductions, unusual plants, perennials, grasses, vines, shrubs, tropicals, succulents, vegetables + a huge selection of heritage tomatoes. *All varieties listed on their website – this is not a mail order company – a family owned specialty nursery. You can tour the gardens as well.*

[**http://pickeringnurseries.com**](http://pickeringnurseries.com) Mail order company specializing in roses – hundreds of varieties available. Located in Port Hope, you can pick up your order if you wish – call ahead. Bare root spring and fall delivery, plus potted roses once the delivery season is over.

[**www.richters.com**](http://www.richters.com) Goodwood, Ontario Located on Highway 47, west of Brock Road. Mail order & pick-up. For all things to do with herbs in a greenhouse setting – plants, seeds, books, & a huge selection of dried herbs & teas. Sample for free various tea mixes. Check under events on the website for free seminars presented by guest speakers in the greenhouse. All lectures are now taped & available on the website if you cannot attend. You can also order or pick up a printed catalogue.

***The following websites do not list their plants so I don’t know what varieties they have for sale.* Therefore, you won’t see them listed on my “where to buy” column even though they may stock the plant**s. I will include these nurseries if I have visited in person and know they have the plants for sale.

**Century Home & Garden Greenhouses** at 1431 Hwy 7a, Port Perry ON L9L 1B5, 905-985-2672.

**Country Market Garden Centre**, 2535 Taunton Rd. E., Bowmanville, L1C 3K2, 905-263-2090 – has a good selection of perennials, roses, trees, shrubs, conifers, annuals and tropical plants at very reasonable prices. Also local produce, baked items and giftware. He always has something unique every year. No website. Brugmansias sold here.

[**www.kingswaygreenhouse.com**](http://www.kingswaygreenhouse.com) Oshawa, Ontario 905-434-3851 A family run business – Plants are not listed on their website, but they have some great varieties – some of their staff are master gardeners!

**John’s Perennials,** [**http://johnsgarden.wordpress.com**](http://johnsgarden.wordpress.com) 905-862-8175, Uxbridge, ON Perennials, annuals, roses, shrubs, trees, rare conifers + more. Open weekends only but call ahead for fall hours – may more extensive

[h**ttp://www.ottergreenhouses.com**](http://www.ottergreenhouses.com) 315 Medd Road, Port Perry, Ontario, L9L 1B2 | (905) 852-4187 Annuals, hanging baskets, perennials, - a family owned business

**Peter Keeping**, Bowmanville, Ontario – sells unusual & hard to find **clematis** as well as perennials at very reasonable prices– Peter imports clematis from Europe/England. Phone 905-697-7842, e-mail peterkeeping@hotmail.com. Call or e-mail for his list of current clematis for sale. Peter and Sheila grow over 250 clematis on their property. They also have assorted perennials and other plants for sale. Does not have a website.

**Pineridge Garden Centre** 2215 Brock Rd, Pickering, ON L1V 2P8 905-683-5952 No website.

[**www.rekkers.com**](http://www.rekkers.com) Rekker's Garden Centre, 2258 Regional Highway 2, Bowmanville, ON L1C 3K7 905-623-2300

[**www.sheridannurseries.com**](http://www.sheridannurseries.com) Whitby location, 410 Taunton Road West, Whitby, ON L1P 2A9 905 686-0844

[**www.vandermeernursery.com**](http://www.vandermeernursery.com) 905-427-2525 588 Lakeridge Rd. S., Ajax, ON (corner of Lakeridge and Bayley). Plants not listed. They carry a huge selection of various plants – trees, shrubs, roses, perennials, annuals, seeds, giftware, etc.

**Some very sad news about one of our local garden centres in Brooklin. Here is the message taken from their website.**

On August 31, 2013, Hotner’s Greenhouse & Garden Centre will be closing its garden gate one last time.

For the past seven years it has been our pleasure providing gardening expertise and quality products to our many loyal customers. We can’t thank you enough for your continued support and patronage throughout the years. And to our avid gardening friends who nominated Hotner’s as the ”Readers’ Select Diamond Award” winner for the past three years: thank you!

It has been an amazing journey, and we are proud to have served our community through our involvement with schools, charities, and many business organizations along the way.

We extend a special thanks to our family and friends, for their never-ending love and support, and to our wonderful, dedicated staff during this adventure. Thank you for making each season memorable.

Our sincere thanks and gratitude to our wonderful community,

Terry and Tammy Hotner

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It is March 26, 2014

***Garden Quote: So many seeds, so little yard****.* ***Unknown***

**EVENTS, 2014:**

<http://www.richters.com/show.cgi?page=Events/events.html&cart_id=7031776.23923> upcoming free seminars. Check their Events menu for more free seminars this spring.

Richters -March 30th, Cold Frame Gardening with Kyla Dixon Muir, Riverdale Meadow Community Garden

Richters -April 6th, Organic Pest & Disease Management with Travis Philp, Greenshire Eco Farms, Lindsay

Richters -April 27th free seminar for all you beer lovers, Growing and Brewing Hops, with Nicholas Schaut, Hop Farmer and President of the Ontario Ho[ Growers Association

April 11th, 12th, & 13th Peterborough Garden show: This is “the” garden show to visit, with lots of plants and garden things for sale.. Check this website for more info: <http://peterboroughgardens.ca/Showhome.html>

Whistling Gardens, located in Wilsonville, Ontario is a wonderful place to visit this summer. Check out the information on this site. You can sign up to be informed of upcoming events as they happen. <https://snt148.mail.live.com/default.aspx?id=64855&rru=inbox#n=69445885&rru=inbox&fid=1&mid=c7c1b5c9-b374-11e3-9371-0024818886f6&fv=1> or go to [www.whistlinggardens.ca](http://www.whistlinggardens.ca) for their main site.

Whitby in Bloom – The free garden tour this summer, featuring private gardens in Whitby and Brooklin, will be held on Saturday, July 19th, 2014. A donation for the food bank is appreciated. Check this website for more information: <http://www.whitby.ca/en/residents/whitbyinbloom.asp>

**AND NOW YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY: Trivia that is not so trivial!**

Do you remember a radio program called “And now you know the rest of the story” told so eloquently by radio broadcaster Paul Harvey? I used to love those segments. I found a fascinating story about a product that was inspired by a pesky weed growing in fields, ditches and in our own garden. This product is used by NASA in the aerospace industry, for scuba and marine gear, by skiers and kids and babies, by nuclear power plants and army tanks, by fashion designers and auto makers just to just name a few.

George De Mestral, an electrical engineer & inventor, was born in Switzerland in 1907.  After returning from a hunting trip, he and his dog were covered in pesky burrs which were extremely difficult to remove.  Burrs are the sputnik like seed heads produced by a weedy plant called burdock.  George decided to examine the burrs under a microscope to find out why they were so sticky. He discovered that the ends of each bristle was not straight as it appeared to the naked eye, but hooked, explaining why they hung on so tenaciously.  The inventor part of him came up with a brilliant idea! He engaged the services of a weaver in Lyon, France, to weave a fabric using cotton, but found it was not strong enough, and instead switched to nylon.  It took him 10 years to develop & perfect his invention. He was granted a patent in 1955 but the product was not popular and it took some time for it to catch on.  The name?  “Vel” from the word velours for the smooth side of the fabric, and “cro” from the word crochet meaning to hook for the hooked side of the product – VELCRO.  And now you know the rest of the story!   Check out this site for the whole fascinating story, inspired by a common weed called burdock. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Velcro#History>

**Last year I told you about some new plants that are now available to consumers:**

First, the **Petchoa**, a cross between a petunia and a calibrachoa. I find calibrachoa’s peter out for me over the summer. Petchoa’s outperform traditional calibrachoas and petunias in their ability to maintain color and tolerate higher temperatures. I tried them a couple of years ago in a 16” pot (3 per pot) and was quite pleased with their performance. I picked a terra cotta colour generally not available in petunias, so a nice change from typical petunia colours. They draped over the edge but did not get as large as a Wave or Supertunia, and lasted until frost.

I also told you about **Mighty Matos** – generally an heirloom tomato (many of which are disease prone), grafted to a less disease prone rootstock. I grew two last year. I was not particularly impressed, especially because they cost so much money. My plants, including vegetables, do not get pampered so perhaps they might have done better if they had been looked after – more water and fertilizer. Needless to say, I did not get more tomatoes and will not grow them again. However, I did love the new huge might mato tomato cages that were made available at the Superstore to accommodate the anticipated “immense” growth of these new tomatoes.

**Fruit:** I told you about a new fruit called **Plumcot**. A Plumcot is a cross between a plum and an apricot. I was shocked to come across this fruit at our Superstore in Brooklin. They are up there with cherries, very expensive at $3.99 per pound! I just had to buy a couple to try them. The fruit looks like a plum, tastes like plum, has the same texture as a plum, and it appears to my mind that the “cot” is “not”. I couldn’t find anything resembling the apricot part of the equation, the fuzziness, the sweetness, but let me know what you think.

**Winter tomatoes** : we all know how awful tomatoes are during the winter months. Last year I discovered a tomato for sale at our local Brooklin Superstore called **Kumato**, a brown tomato from Mexico, sold in prepackaged lots of 5-6 tomatoes. You may have seen them and wondered what they were like. Don’t let the brown colour put you off – it is a very tasty tomato! In addition, I love the colours when sliced or quartered. The outer layer is brownish red, the brown turns inward to burgundy and the inner part is a lovely antique pink. It is very reasonably priced at $2.99 per package and one additional feature – good “shelf” life.

**IS IT A POMATO OR A TOMTATO**? Whatever you call it, is produces tomatoes above ground and potatoes below ground on the same plant.   A bizarre but brilliant idea!   A tomato stem is grafted to a potato stem when they are both about 8” high, possible because both plants are from the same family Solanaceae.  Imagine the commercial benefits! If it takes off, it could revolutionize the way farmers grow tomatoes and potatoes as one spacing saving plant!  I saw these grafted plants for sale in the UK, at 15 pounds each (yikes), and for sale in New Zealand for $7.99. Hopefully, someone in Canada will have these for sale this year. If you see one, buy it for me and I will gladly reimburse you. Check this site for more info: <http://www.zmescience.com/science/domestic-science/tomtato-or-pomato-half-potato-half-tomato-plant-increases-crop-efficiency/>  and this site if you want to try grafting your own  <http://voices.yahoo.com/grow-own-amazing-pomato-plant-tomatoes-the-223101.html?cat=32>  .

**VEGETABLES – GROW YOUR OWN**

I thought I would focus on vegetables this month as you may be planning a vegetable garden this year. Regardless whether you have a football sized garden or a balcony garden, growing vegetables is great fun. Nothing beats going to my organic vegetable patch with basket in hand to gather food for supper – asparagus, rhubarb (**see end for rhubarb/strawberry crisp recipe**), strawberries, chives, sorrel in the spring, tomatoes, peppers, corn, beets, beans, butternut squash, garlic, raspberries, blackberries, pumpkins, okra, carrots in summer & fall, as well as herbs like parsley, dill, basil, rosemary, oregano, thyme. My vegetable patch is one of my favourite gardens on my property. It is surrounded by 3 dry stone walls, the fourth is a wall of asparagus. The main stone arched entrance is one of 5. I grow flowers there as well – cosmos, English roses, sweet peas, lavender, love-lies-bleeding, zinnias, clematis, daylilies, sunflowers, and lots of trial plants grown from seed over the winter. It is a wonderful place!

Growing vegetables from seed is not necessarily a cost saving venture. It is hard to resist all the new varieties available and seed orders can become quite expensive, considering the availability of these vegetables in the fall. I generally like to grow the vegetables that are expensive to buy and ones that might be loaded with chemical sprays if not homegrown. Well, who am I kidding!! I pretty well grow everything because it is organic and the taste is far superior to anything purchased at the grocery stores – even potatoes taste better. I don’t grow anything in the brassica family (cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, etc.) because of serious flea beetle infestations and the horrible green cabbage caterpillars that sneak into your broccoli unnoticed. However, I do grow dinosaur kale, even though it gets flea beetle damage. A grocer recently mentioned that some of his customers look for kale with flea beetle holes in the leaves – indicating that they had not been sprayed!

**SEED STARTING:** If you are interested in growing from seed, here is an excellent site using various methods, including the baggy method – my favourite way to germinate seeds (I use Bounty paper towels instead of coffee filters, do not use cheap paper towels, they fall apart). **Do not use the baggy method for tiny seeds – it will be impossible to transfer them from towel to cell pack. I use the smallest clear plastic deli pots – ones you would use for bulk olives, holes drilled in the bottom for drainage and the plastic lid attached firmly until germination occurs. The lid is then flipped over the deli pot, to allow a bit of air and to retain moisture to help the tiny seedlings develop. Use a soiless mix for all seed growing.** <http://www.robsplants.com/seed/starting.php>

**Tip:** Parsley, onions, basil, leeks, swiss chard: I don’t bother seeding these plants anymore – it is not worth it. You can purchase all these plants pre-started at any nursery. Parsley is tricky to germinate – I prefer the more flavourful Italian variety. **Parsley**, **basil** & **swiss chard** are offered in 4 inch pots. The growers through a handful of seeds in the pot and you get the benefit of several plants for less than $3.00. Gently pry the seedlings apart and plant directly in the garden after frost or in small individual pots or cell packs in a frost free location until planting time (look for pots with several stockier seedlings – the smaller, the better for transplanting) I once got 78 basil plants in one pot!!. Onion sets & leeks are readily available & can be planted directly in the garden in April. My favourite **swiss chard** is “**bright lights**”. The stems can be pink, yellow, red, white, apricot or orange. These make great additions to a perennial garden as well, with their brightly coloured stems and interesting leaves. They will take several hits of frost, and they also freeze well.

**Carrots**: I usually have difficulty germinating carrot seed. Last year, I purchased carrot seed tapes at the nursery. These are pre-spaced and “glued” to a ½ inch tape – coming in 15 foot lengths per package for about $3.00. I cut them up in 4 foot lengths and planted them before a rainfall. Got an excellent yield without the arduous task of thinning!

**SEEDZOO:** Richters.com located in Goodwood ON, has started a program called SEEDZOO. Their aim is to preserve traditional and indigenous food plants from around the world. They search for rare and endangered food plants that you can grow in your own garden. You can buy the seeds at their Goodwood location or order on-line. Here is the site <http://www.richters.com/show.cgi?page=./SeedZoo/seedzoo.html>

**TOP VEGETABLES**: I found an interesting book at the Brooklin library called “The 150 Healthiest Foods on Earth”, written by Jonny Bowden, Ph.D., C.N.S. I like this book so much I have since purchased my own copy from Chapters in Ajax. This book is divided into categories – vegetables, grains, fruits, herbs, etc. This month, I am focussing on the vegetables. Every vegetable in the book has its own sub-chapter with extensive nutritional information, as well as caveats to be mindful of i.e. grapefruit hinders absorption of certain medications; oxalates in spinach, swiss chard, which foods are more contaminated with pesticides so go organic if possible, etc. The ones shown with an asterisk are considered “super vegetables”. Try growing some of these in your own garden this year. I was thinking of starting a small patch of dandelions in my vegetable garden for those tasty, bitter spring greens!

Here are the top vegetables listed in the book.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Artichokes** | **Dandelion\*** | **Peppers, hot & sweet** |
| **Arugula** | **Eggplant** | **Pumpkin** |
| **Asparagus** | **Fennel** | **Purslane** |
| **Beets\*** | **Green beans** | **Spinach\*** |
| **Bok Choy** | **Horseradish** | **Squash – summer & winter** |
| **Broccoli\*** | **Jerusalem Artichokes** | **Sweet potatoes** |
| **Broccoli Rabi** | **Jicama** | **Swiss chard\*** |
| **Brussels Sprouts\*** | **Kale\*** | **Tomatoes** |
| **Cabbage\*** | **Kohlrabi** | **Turnips** |
| **Carrots\*** | **Leeks** | **Watercress\*** |
| **Cauliflower** | **Mushrooms\*** | **Runner up Parsnip** |
| **Celery** | **Okra** | **Runner up rutabaga** |
| **Collard greens** | **Onions\*** | **Runner up snow peas** |

**CRAZY KALE:** Why kale is number one!! Did you know that the current vegetable craze is all about the once lowly kale? Here is an entry in the kale segment of this book – *“currently there is a testing procedure used by the USDA to determine the antioxidant capacity of fruits and vegetables. Foods are given what’s called an ORAC rating –oxygen radical absorbance capacity. Though there are different versions of the test, the best known has kale as the number one among the vegetables, with an ORAC value of 1770, and spinach with an ORAC value of 1260. ”* Kale is rated the top vegetable, followed by spinach!

Have you ever heard of **Kale Chips**? I have included a recipe at the end of this presentation for you to try. You can also eat it boiled, sautéed or in a salad heavily crushed (by hand) & chopped with some toasted pine nuts or walnuts, dried cranberries or raisins, croutons, with a swirl of balsamic vinegar, a swirl of oil, a swirl of lemon juice, sea salt to taste and (chopped raw garlic and feta - optional). Remove the tough stems before cooking or crushing.

**SQUARE FOOT GARDENING** – we have all heard of this gardening method –it has been around for years, made popular by Mel Bartholomew’s many books. The idea is to plant one large plant per square foot, i.e. tomato, pepper, corn, cucumber, and plant several smaller ones in one square foot – onion sets, bush beans, radishes, lettuce, leeks, etc. <http://squarefootgardening.org/square-foot-gardening-method>

Even though I have 10 acres, I still use the square foot method in my vegetable garden. I have designed all the beds to be 4 feet wide (mine are actually 5 feet to allow for overhang) by whatever length you want with a 2+ foot wide path in between beds. This enables you to work each side without stepping on your garden beds & compacting the soil. I particularly like my raised beds that are framed in 2 inch by 10 inch boards. My aim is to convert all my beds to wooden beds. These beds are ideal for containing plants that like to run/& or spread – strawberries, raspberries, pumpkins, squash, cucumbers. I wouldn’t grow strawberries any other way – believe me I have tried. OK the first year, then they get out of hand very quickly, spreading all over, filled with weeds.

**NO ROOM FOR CORN? TRY THIS**: Here is Mel’s “new” method for growing corn which can yield as many as 64 ears or more from a 4 by 4 foot space. His older method was to plant one seed per square foot but he tried planting 4 seeds per square foot for a PBS TV show with great success. He suggested using a shorter growing corn called **Butterfruit** which yields 1 ear per plant, or you can up the harvest by planting a corn that yields 2 ears per plant if you choose **Early Sunglow**. I am going to try this method this year. These two varieties of corn are available at this site, but you could certainly use any other variety. <http://parkseed.com/corn/c/corn/>

**KALE CHIPS**

This an excellent site for step by step instructions for making kale chips. <http://www.kitchentreaty.com/how-to-make-kale-chips> . Here is their recipe.

**Ingredients**

* 1 bunch kale
* 1 tablespoon olive oil
* ¼ teaspoon kosher salt, more or less to taste

**Instructions**

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Wash kale leaves and dry very well.
3. Using a paring knife or kitchen scissors, trim out the ribs and discard. Cut the remaining kale into approximately two-inch pieces.
4. Place kale in a large bowl and toss gently but thoroughly, making sure that every last bit of kale leave is coated with olive oil.
5. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Lay kale in a single layer on the baking sheet and sprinkle with salt. (If you have more kale than baking sheet, you may need to cook them in batches).
6. Bake for 8 – 12 minutes, just until crisp. Start checking at 8 minutes – don’t over cook or they’ll burn! I find that Lacinato\*\* kale cooks faster than curly kale.
7. Remove from oven and let cool for a minute or two, then serve.

**Note: \*\*** Now you know why I like Latin names!! Take a look at all the names for this kale. Tuscankale, Tuscan cabbage, Italian kale, Dinosaur kale, cavolo nero (may be misspelled as cavalo nero), black kale, flat back cabbage, palm tree kale, or black Tuscan palm. The plant is so popular now that you can find seeds locally at most garden centres, but for sure at [www.richters.com](http://www.richters.com). I have seen seedlings for sale at [www.masonhousegardens.com](http://www.masonhousegardens.com) if you don’t want to bother with seeds.

**Sofie’s Tip**: Once you grow *nero di Toscana* or Tuscan kale (*Brassica oleracea*) or dinosaur kale – whatever you call it, you won't want to bother with other varieties. It tastes better, is easier to use & clean compared to the very curly ones, and is extremely resilient. Even though mine gets attacked by flea beetles, it keeps on trucking after several hits of frost. It actually tastes better when hit by frost. It is highly admired by visitors to my garden. A great kale for kids to grow as it has a bubbly (savoyed) texture resembling lizards and alligators!

**RHUBARB STRAWBERRY CRISP – a delicious recipe from my sister-in-law Allison, 1996**

**Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees F.**

**Filling:**

**4 cups diced rhubarb**

**1 cup white granulated sugar**

**2 tablespoons cornstarch**

**1 tablespoon butter**

**1 tablespoon water (maybe 2 tablespoons at most)**

**¼ teaspoon cinnamon**

**1 cup diced strawberries**

**I would add 1 or two tablespoons lemon juice (optional)**

**Topping:**

**1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour**

**½ cup rolled oats**

**½ cup brown sugar**

**3 tablespoons butter**

**Bring to a boil the rhubarb, sugar, cornstarch, butter, water and cinnamon for a couple of minutes. Take off heat. Add strawberries. Pour into 9”x9” oven-proof glass pan. Cover with topping and pat down. Bake @ 350 degrees F. for ½ hour.**