

Late Winter/Early Spring
March 2002

It's hard to believe how bleak everything looked just a few short weeks ago. Everything was in a deep slumber, just waiting for the right conditions to begin anew. Our feverfew and salad burnet managed to survive the freezing temperatures in January and February, and actually seemed to thrive in the cold weather. Same with the parsley, thyme, sage and many of the other herbs. Some herbs looked pretty badly hit with the freeze (down to the mid-twenties!!) but are now coming alive with wonderful new growth that looks even better than last year – chives, tarragon, the mints, and oreganos. The pocket-pot we planted in late fall with a variety of culinary herbs, also came through unscathed. Some of the lavender was hit hard by the freeze, but most of the plants survived and we see the beginnings of new growth. We're not sure about the lemon verbena--some signs of life have appeared and we have our fingers crossed. Walking around the garden today, we are amazed to see all the herbaceous plants already hard at work putting out new growth. It won't be long now and the ground will have warmed up enough so that we can start our spring planting.

January found us by the fire pouring over the seed catalogs trying to anticipate your spring gardening needs. During February, we were busy getting all the seeds started and now have a greenhouse full of new plants in 4" pots that we hope you will want for your garden. In addition to your typical herbs, ornamentals and vegetables, we have some interesting new varieties. These include the extra-early tomato "Legend", a parthenocarpic variety (sets fruit without pollination) producing sweet 4-5" fruits approx. 68 days after transplant; "White Anniversary" oregano, a lovely variegated variety; an array of basil from sweet mammoth to Thai to salad to cinnamon; and many others.

About the only sad event during the cold winter months was seeing a "giant" Blue Heron make off with the Koi from the pond. Bon appetite? We are consoling ourselves with the thought that the heron must have been hungry and we did our part in participating in the life cycle. Maybe from now on we should only keep "feeder" goldfish!?!

Don't forget to mark your calendar for Saratoga Horticulture's annual Spring Plant Sale on April 20th from 9am to 2pm here in San Martin. As usual, they will have a wonderful variety of bedding plants, shrubs, and trees for sale. We will be there with our herbs and gourmet veggies. This is *the* place to find varieties that do well in our area. Please check their website at www.saratogahortfoundation.org for complete information and directions.

As you start thinking about how you want your garden to grow this year, please visit us here at the gardens **every Thursday from 9am to 1pm and on the first and third Saturdays from 9am to 1pm**. We have many new plants to inspire you and an expanded selection of heirloom and gourmet vegetables for your summer garden.

Herb of the Month: CHIVES (Allium schoenoprasum)

Chives were first discovered in China almost 5,000 years ago. Eventually they made their way to European herb gardens and are now a well-known American favorite. Chives make attractive edging plants and, in addition to being good to eat, are recommended companion plants for carrots, roses, cucumbers, apples, and tomatoes--they repel beetles, ward off black spot, apple scab, and powdery mildew. A new plant will be tiny the first year, but every year afterwards will increase in size and abundance. Chives are a wonderfully versatile herb. Try adding chives to mayonnaise, along with chopped green pepper and pimento and serve with chilled shrimp or crab. Enhance your butter or margarine with chives, parsley, and rosemary or thyme, and use

on warmed rolls or vegetables. Make a chive-cheese sauce to use over cauliflower. Blend milk, cream cheese and chives. Heat and serve over the cauliflower.

<http://www.belleviegardens.com/>