

Belle Vie

Gardens & Nursery

April 2002 Newsletter

The gardening bug can bite at any moment.
- Barbara Damrosch

Has the spring planting bug bit you yet? It certainly has us. As soon as we began to see the blossoms in the trees and new growth peaking out from our herbaceous plants, we couldn't hold ourselves back. This past month, we prepared our growing field where we will have tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and other vegetables that will be available for harvesting by our customers. We rototilled, spread a heavy layer of straw in the pathways, and laid out the drip irrigation. The vegetable seedlings are ready to go in the ground, and planting can now begin. We've had a very favorable response from customers to this plan--"we'd rather come and pick from you than do the planting ourselves", so look for more information coming soon.

Beginning May 1, we will expand our opening days and hours:

Thursdays and Fridays	9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Saturdays	9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Morgan Hill Farmers' Market and 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM here at the nursery (after the Farmers' Market)

Don't forget to drop by the Morgan Hill Farmers' Market starting Saturday, May 11--we'll be there with plants and fresh herbs for the cutting. May 12th is Mother's Day, we'll have some pre-planted herbal container gardens that mom will love on her windowsill or patio. Or, if you wish, you may order a customized herbal selection in one of our unique containers or a special container of yours.

Herb(s) of the Month: Herbs That Attract the Beneficial Insects

Recently I overheard a comment someone made that it had been several years since they had seen any butterflies, ladybugs or bees around their area. These beneficial insects provide a great service in our gardens and should be encouraged. They help pollinate and keep destructive pests under control. Two herbs that do this are **BERGAMOT** Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) and **LEMON BALM** (*Melissa officinalis*).

Bergamot is native to North America and is also known as Oswego. The leaves have a citrusy fragrance & taste, and **Lemon Bergamot** (*M.d. citriodora*) is even more strongly lemon scented. During the period of the Boston Tea Party, **Bergamot** made a popular tea drunk by the colonists in place of black tea. The flowers range from a showy pink to pink-purple to a brilliant scarlet. The "**Panorama Red**" variety has flowers of deep red shades. Bees and hummingbirds can't resist and the lemon scent can be a deterrent to pests.

The smell of lemon with a hint of mint has endeared people to **LEMON BALM** for at least 2,000 years. The Greek physician Dioscorides would prescribe a comforting tea made from Lemon Balm for his patients. Use the leaves in salads, soups & stews. The white to yellowish flowers produce abundant nectar and bees and hummingbirds are drawn to it. Here again, the lemony scent of its leaves can be a deterrent to pests, especially the **Lemon Balm Citronella** variety that has a very high oil content.

Herbal Tea

Refreshing herbal tea can be made from fresh or dried leaves of any of the above mentioned herbs. Try blending with lavender flowers, rosemary or mint. Use about 2 tablespoons fresh leaves in a cup. Pour boiling water and let steep for 5 minutes. Add lemon slices and honey. Sit back and enjoy the aroma and taste!

Happy Gardening,
Donna Ahern and Kathy Nolan