

Belle Vie

Gardens & Nursery

November 2002 Newsletter

It's Almost Nap Time in the Garden . . .

The leaves are beginning to fall in earnest now, and the days are shorter and cooler. Time to get the garden ready for its winter sleep. Well, really, more like a short nap here in the Santa Clara Valley (before we know it, spring will be just around the corner). To help your garden into its winter rest, stop fertilizing and ease up on your watering schedule. This will allow your herbs and perennials to follow their natural course as they store energy in their roots and crown in preparation for winter dormancy.

The mid-October Annual Fall Plant sale at the Saratoga Horticulture Research Foundation was a fun event. Many gardening enthusiasts came early to get the best pick of a great selection of bedding plants, annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees, and, of course, we were there with our fine herbs. Look for news of their spring sale--a not to be missed event.

The Holidays will be here before you know it. We have some great stocking stuffers and items to help you with your kitchen crafts. Lavender sachets in both plain and decorative muslin bags are **scent**-sational to add to closets & lingerie drawers, automobile interiors, clothes dryers, desk & stationery drawers, vacuum cleaner bags, and make a great and inexpensive gift. Also, we have discovered the best gardening gloves ever! Since January, they have been the only gloves we want to use to the exclusion of all our other gloves. They have held up admirably during our extensive use and so we had to have them to offer to you. Additionally, we have glass bottles and jars for you to store your dried herbs or to make your own flavored oils and vinegar to give as gifts, as well as our signature dried oregano, which is available in bulk or by the jar.

Our informational discussions generated such interest during our Fall Herbs in the Garden event, that we will continue them over the next few months, as follows:

The "Edible" Garden	October 26	2:30 – 3:00 pm
Herbal Uses for Kitchen & Bath	November 2	1:00 – 1:30 pm
The Winter Garden	November 16	1:00 – 1:30 pm
Wreaths & Crafts	December 7	1:00 – 1:30 pm
Rose Planting & Pruning	January 18	1:00 – 1:30 pm

Our winter hours through the end of March are:

1st & 3rd Saturday 9:00 to 4:00 pm

and on other days, if you're going to be in the area and would like to stop by, please give us a call—we're usually out and about with one chore or another (the gardening never stops).

Herb of the Month: Bay Laurel or Sweet Bay (*Laurus nobilis*)

Down through the ages, bay gained a reputation as a protector from all sorts of evils. During thunder and lightening storms the fearless emperor Tiberius "could always be found under his bed, a laurel wreath upon his head." The Greeks and Romans wove wreaths of bay to crown the heads of kings, prophets, poets, and the victors of battles and athletic or scholarly contests. At the first Olympics in 776 BC, bay leaf garlands were presented to the champions. In the Middle Ages, herbalists used bay to cure everything from snakebite to rheumatism. Even today, a bay infused bath is said to promote relaxation and soothe the skin.

Bays make a wonderful & aromatic container plant, growing to about 5 ft in a pot. In the garden, the bay makes a wonderful landscape tree. They have been known to grow to 60 ft, but can be kept to desired height with pruning. The leaves can be harvested for use throughout the year. They are best used fresh, but can be dried and stored in an airtight jar.

Here are some fall recipes to try (over) . . .

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

Cauliflower Capri

(from a restaurant on the Isle of Capri)

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| 1 | Whole head cauliflower | Salt to taste |
| 1 | Bay leaf | Grated nutmeg to taste |

Clean a whole cauliflower without breaking up the florets and remove all but the smallest green leaves. Bring two inches of water to boil in a saucepan with a tight fitting lid. Add salt and bay leaf to the water. Rest the cauliflower, base down, in the pan with the lid on and cook until tender, about 8-10 minutes. Drain and melt a little butter over the cauliflower and sprinkle with grated nutmeg. Serve at once.

What would stew be without a bay leaf---we like this recipe . . .

Classic Beef Stew

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| 3 Tbsp | All-purpose flour |
| 1 tsp | Paprika |
| 2 lbs. | Beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes |
| 2 Tbsp | Cooking oil (Olive or Canola) |
| 1 | Onion, chopped |
| 1 | Medium leek, white part only, chopped |
| 2 | Garlic cloves, minced |
| 1 cup | Red wine |
| 3 | Celery ribs, sliced |
| 3 | Carrots, sliced |
| 3 | Medium potatoes, peeled and cubed (or use red potatoes with skins on) |
| 4 cups | Beef broth |
| | Herb Bundle (parsley, thyme, sweet marjoram, bay leaf) |
| | Salt & pepper to taste |

Combine flour, 1 tsp salt, & paprika in a plastic bag. Add meat and shake to coat. In a large Dutch oven (or similar stew pot), brown the meat, 1/3 at a time (do not crowd), in hot oil. *Do not rush the browning process since this is where much of the rich flavor is formed.* Set meat aside. Add onion & leek to pot and cook until transparent and lightly browned. Add garlic and return the meat to the pot. Add the wine and cook for 2 minutes. Add the broth and bring to a boil. Add the herb bundle. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 1-1/2 hours, or until meat is almost fork tender. Add potatoes, carrots, and celery. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper to required. Cover and simmer for an additional 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until the meat is fork tender and the vegetables are done. Remove herb bundle, sprinkle with fresh chopped parsley and serve.

Herb Bundle: Tie together parsley stems (leaves can become bitter with pro-longed cooking), thyme & marjoram sprigs, and bay leaf with kitchen twine.

Some other uses for Bay (rubbing the leaf helps release the essential oils):

- Add a rubbed bay leaf to the water when cooking beans, lentils, rice or other grains
- Tuck a rubbed bay leaf into the cavity of a chicken before roasting
- Add a rubbed bay leaf to your spiced fruit punches
- **Remember to remove bay leaves before serving, as they are indigestible.**

Happy Gardening (and Good Eating),
Donna Ahern and Kathy Nolan