



Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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Greetings,

The warm weather is finally here. Time to go outdoors and enjoy.

Welcome to Our New Faces

Karla Bigelow has settled seamlessly into her role as Crew Supervisor this spring. She worked in a nursery and held a similar supervisory position with another company. Her passion is growing herbs and making herbal remedies.



Alex Slakie & Karla Bigelow

Alex Slakie comes to our part-time crew from the Pacific Northwest where he worked extensively with native plants. He moved to Sterling last fall to run a family apple orchard and medicinal herb business with his partner, Emily. We are happy to know that theirs is an all-organic operation.

John Schneider has just joined the crew this month. He had his own landscape company in southern Connecticut and more recently worked in the health care industry. In his spare time he operates a bed and breakfast in Acton and enjoys putting in his garden.



John Schneider

Plant of the Month - Magnolia sieboldii, the Oyama Magnolia

There are magnolias to extend the season of bloom from mid April through summer in New England. Colors range from



Magnolia sieboldii flowers

cream to pale yellow to various shades of pink and purple. One of the finest is *Magnolia sieboldii* which sets numerous white, egg-shaped buds to bloom in May and June. This superb plant features 3"-4" nodding flowers with pink to maroon-red center. Its form is either an elegant large shrub or small tree, an ideal understory planting.



Magnolia sieboldii



Magnolia sieboldii seed pod

Plant a Bee Friendly Garden and Your Plants Will Thank You

Did you know that one out of every three bites of food produced worldwide depends on pollinators, particularly bees? Bees are in a state of decline and colony collapse disorder has been on the rise in recent years. The cause of colony collapse disorder is still a mystery but is likely a combination of factors that includes the widespread use of pesticides and fungicides, as well as the spread of viral pathogens and parasitic mites in beehives.



Bee Gathering Pollen

I know what you are thinking, "That's nice, but bees sting!" The fact is that most native bees are unlikely to sting unless grabbed or stepped on. There are 400 native bee species in New England alone. Only honey bees, bumble bees, and yellow jackets are likely to sting when their nests are disturbed. Respect their role and territory and they will leave you alone.

Here are a few tips that you can use to help the bees by providing them with sources of food and habitat:

Choose plants that will attract pollinators. Some favorites include:

- Herbs like mint, lavender and chives
- Fruits like strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and melons
- Vegetables like cucumbers, pumpkins, tomatoes, squash and broccoli
- Perennials like asters, black eyed susans, gaillardia, bachelor's buttons, bee balm, sedum and peony
- Annuals like sunflowers, cosmos, marigolds, and zinnias

Plant large patches of each species of plant. Flowers should be planted in close proximity to one another and each species patch should be approximately five feet apart.

Plant a diverse garden. Bees have preferences; not only for their favorite flowers but also for the gardens they visit. Gardens with ten or more species of attractive plants will attract the largest number of bees.

Leave patches of bare soil. Ground nesting bees create small tunnels in the soil where they can lay their eggs. They are detracted by mulch so make sure to leave some bare ground.

Finally, appreciate bee friendly plants. Dandelion, clover, milkweed, and goldenrod are favorites for bees. Leave these plants in an area of your yard, enjoy the color they bring to it, and know that you are also helping out the bees by leaving them.

Watering Update

This continues to be a very dry spring overall, so I'll reiterate my watering plea here once again for anything planted or transplanted in your garden over the past three years, especially large woody plants. Working in my own garden the other day, I was pleasantly surprised to notice how cool and full of moisture the soil seemed. However, I was on a shady bank where the snow melts last, and in an area where there was moss before I began planting shrubs and groundcovers about 10 years ago. But I think that my layer of shredded leaves, applied late last fall, is helping to retain essential moisture in the soil!

Here is another copy of our [Spring watering instructions](#) if you need it.

Tick & Mosquito Emergency Spraying Available

We will be out spraying Tick & Mosquito repellent on an as needed basis next week. This could be of interest to you for your graduation parties and other outdoor social gatherings where you might like to be free of these uninvited guests.

For those already signed up for the Tick and Mosquito spray and who would like us to come early for your event, we will continue on the original schedule in July.

If you are not already signed up, this service is available on a one time basis.

You must let us know no later than Tuesday, May 28th if you would like this service.

What to Do about Winter Moth?

We have had a few inquiries about this pest recently. Early May is the time when the larvae are actively eating new leaves of canopy trees and dropping down to feed on choice understory ornamental trees and shrubs!



Damage done by winter moth.

Our suggestion is that you contract with an arborist for their spray programs, as our spray equipment is not powerful enough to reach into the tree canopies. We can now spray Bt on the caterpillars that may be feeding on small plants such as roses. However, the real issue lies with the large trees above.

For a list of arborists that serve our area, please see our [website](#).

Other Pests of Late Spring

During our visits, we are now on the lookout for the following problems in the landscape:

Scale - Masses of white beads or white woolliness on the underside of leaves of holly, boxwood, rhododendron. Control: Neem oil. Prune and dispose of severely infected branches and twigs. Prune to promote good air circulation.

Sawfly - It seems there is a specific sawfly for almost every type of plant. Generally we see a green worm of various shapes, eating margins of leaves or consuming needles of an evergreen. Control: Insecticidal soap or Neem oil.

Boxwood Psyllid - Larvae damage foliage with curling and cupping around stem tips. Control: Insecticidal soap at first sign of damage.

Hydrangea Leaf Tier - New growth "stitched" together by

caterpillars who feed inside this shelter. Control: Open up leaves and spray Bt. Often there are two generations to watch for.

Rose Slug Sawfly - This pest will be coming our way in early June when the soil is warm enough for it to emerge from the ground. Watch for a sudden "brown out" of rose leaves. The green worm-like larvae will be feeding on the reverse side and often skeletonize the plant very quickly. Control: Neem oil. We then foliar feed the rose weekly to help it push out new growth.



Roseslug sawfly

Once again this fall, we'll be amending garden soils around plants that are prone to these and other insect problems. We find that a soil too high in Phosphorus attracts more insect pests, so the challenge is to bring other nutrient levels up to meet the already naturally high level of Phosphorus present in soils in our area. This process often takes several years to accomplish, so bear with the process. Time will bring clean new growth to your plants.

May Is the Time For.....

- Pruning late to leaf out shrubs such as Itea, Clethra, Rose of Sharon, Smokebush and Winterberry
- Editing spreading perennials such as Bee Balm, Aster and hardy Chrysanthemum
- Pinching back tall perennials to control sprawl such as Montauk daisy, Aster, Helonium and Agastache
- Staking peonies
- Keeping up with weeding - lift the basal leaves of perennials to find them all!
- Training climbing roses and clematis to trellis supports
- Transplanting and dividing late season blooming perennials
- Transplanting shrubs
- Planting just about everything, but watch forecasts for temperatures that may dip into the 30s before setting out tropical plants or warm weather vegetables and



Nicely staked peonies

annuals

- Deadheading and fertilizing bulbs
- Edging beds and mulching to cut down on weeding chores later, also to hold in moisture
- Watering any newly planted material, including transplants (see spring watering tips)
- Making notes about new bulbs to plant this fall, along with any other garden changes

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To all our clients, we hope you have a relaxing Memorial Day weekend. We hope you are enjoying your gardens that we have had the privilege to work in.

Sincerely,
Priscilla

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